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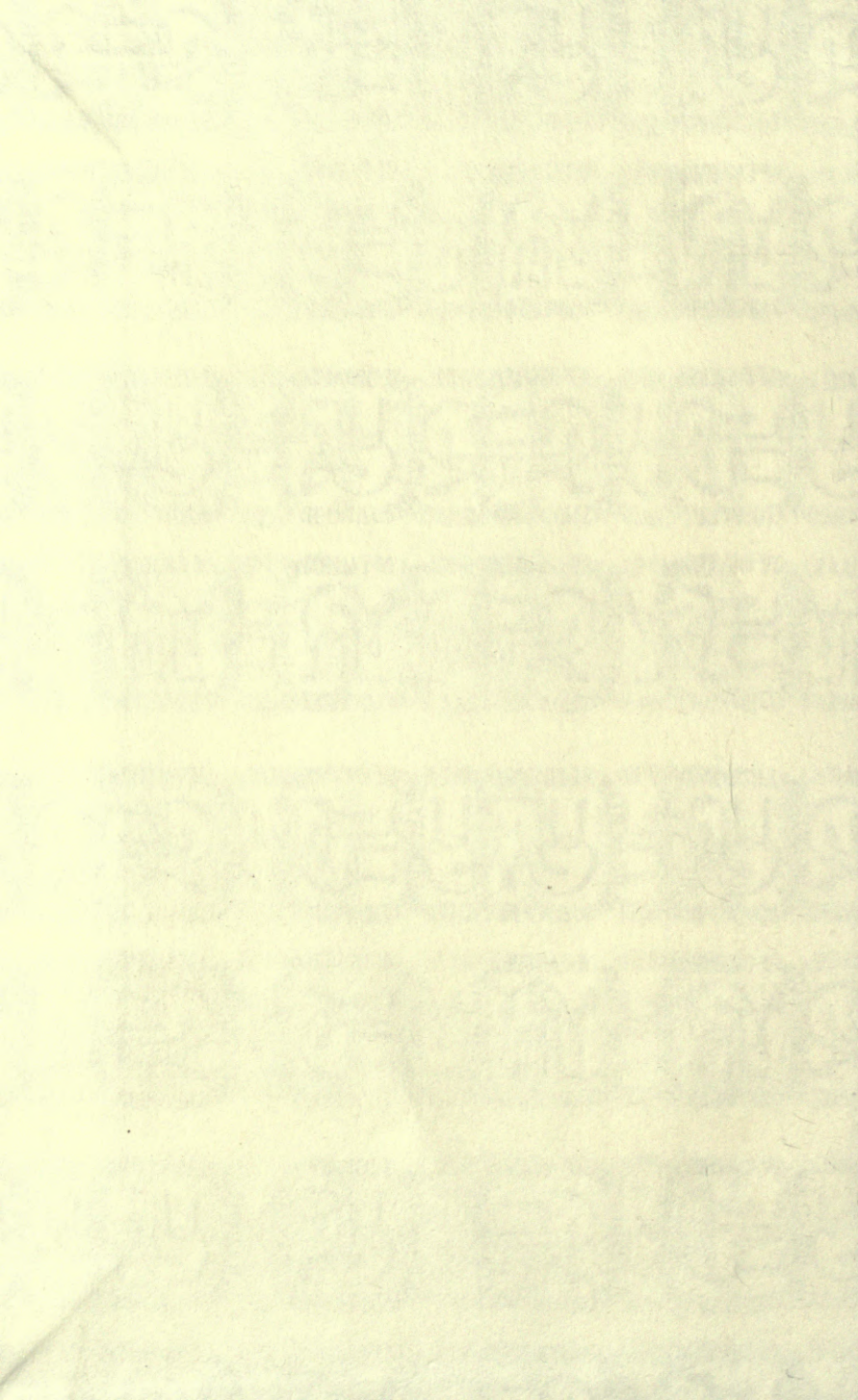


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*Lord Henry Petty*  
*Don Street from the Author*  
AN

INQUIRY *into the*

INTO THE

# POLICY AND JUSTICE

OF THE

PROHIBITION OF THE USE OF GRAIN

IN THE

DISTILLERIES :

INCLUDING

OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURE AND USES OF A VENT TO  
SUPERFLUOUS LAND-PRODUCE ; AND A PARTICULAR APPLICATION  
OF THE GENERAL QUESTION TO THE PRESENT SITUATION OF  
THE COLONIAL INTERESTS.

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BY ARCHIBALD BELL, ESQ. ADVOCATE.

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1808.

2 March Street

INQUIRY

POLICY AND JUSTICE

PROVISIONS OF THE ACT OF 1841

IN THE

DISTRICT

COURT

AND IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF

THE SAYS COURT OF THE SAYS COURT

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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To those who are familiar with the doctrines of political economy, the minuteness of illustration and detail, in the following remarks, may appear superfluous. But when we consider how important it is, in a popular government like ours, that the public be possessed of just notions on schemes of national policy; and, when we see such fundamental and exploded errors advanced on a subject so interesting as the present, I am hopeful that they who least require a detailed explanation, will be the most sensible of its utility.

It will also be found, that the principles which I have endeavoured to establish are of general application, and may enable us to judge, not merely of the present measure, but of all similar schemes of policy. They indeed involve the most extensive and fundamental doctrines in the science of political economy.

I likewise hope that some of the facts and reasonings which I have advanced, may tend to dissipate

those groundless alarms on the subject of scarcity, which some persons seem at present to feel; a passion which, of all others, is the most apt to bewilder the public opinion, and to urge a headlong adoption of those measures which are the most likely to create or aggravate such a calamity.

The present situation of our colonies I shall also touch upon, as connected with the more general questions which arise on the present subject: though on this, as being less important in itself, and less within my opportunities of information, I shall be more brief.

The Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, relative to the distillation of sugar, and the very large and important mass of evidence contained in the Appendix, I have had the benefit of perusing. Any testimony of mine to the ability, patience, and candour with which that respectable body have conducted their researches, would be impertinent. I have taken the liberty of dissenting from their opinion; but I have stated the grounds of my dissent, and, I hope, with that becoming deference and moderation which should always accompany free inquiry. If any thing material in the evidence laid before the Committee should have escaped me, it will perhaps be excused, from the shortness of the time allowed for its perusal. A copy of the Report is subjoined in an Appendix.



Since these remarks were sent to the press, the subject came under the discussion of the House of Commons on Friday the 20th of May. It appeared, by what fell from Lord Binning, the Chairman of the Committee, on that occasion, that there was an intention of making some change on the suggestion in the Report, to suspend the distillation of grain for one year from the 1st July 1808, by proposing a restriction for some shorter period. No variation of that kind, however, can influence the grounds on which I maintain the following argument.



INQUIRY  
INTO THE  
POLICY AND JUSTICE  
OF THE  
*PROHIBITION OF THE USE OF GRAIN*  
IN THE  
DISTILLERIES, &c.

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THE distress of our West India Colonies has for some time excited the public attention ; and as the persons chiefly interested in colonial produce, though a small, are not an unimportant class of the community, endowed with the spirit, and possessing the weight and activity of an affluent corporation, it is by no means surprising that their complaints have been heard. They have laid them before the public in various shapes ; and, with the common propensity of human nature, in examining into the source of their distresses, they have found



every one to blame but themselves. They have accounted for the present stagnation of their commodity in their hands by every cause but the true one,—their own imprudent speculation.

That the present glut of sugar has arisen from an over cultivation of that produce, so as to overstock the market of the world ; and that our planters must sooner or later diminish their cultivation, now that more fertile soils are reviving, and entering the competition ; seem to me truths, which can hardly be doubted by any whose opinion is not in some degree biased by their interest. The thing is probable in theory ; and, were any confirmation of it wanted, it would be derived from the inadequate causes assigned for their present difficulties by the colonists themselves. It may perhaps be doubted, whether persons so suffering, are entitled to any relief from the public ; or, whether they ought not to be left to that correction which the immutable laws of nature have provided for rash speculation. This is a question, however, on which I at present forbear to enter. My chief purpose is, to inquire how far, if any relief is to be granted, that which has been proposed, of confining the home distillation to sugar, be a proper one. I shall endeavour to

shew, that it is improper in every view ; impolitic in regard to the public interest ; and unjust towards our home cultivators.

When the subject of prohibiting distillation from grain was so much agitated a few years ago, the complexion of the question differed materially from what it is at present. It was then debated entirely on general grounds. The only interests considered were those of the public, and of the home grower ; the consumer and producer of our domestic supplies. The interests of the colonists were not at all insisted on. Indeed the idea of distilling from sugar does not then seem to have been generally entertained. The question was argued as if the stoppage of the distillery would altogether suspend the formation of ardent spirit ; and hence two arguments were applied to it, on either side, which do not touch it in its present shape. The one was in favour of the distillery, on the score of its use to the revenue : the other against it, on the effects of the consumption of distilled spirit on the health, morals, and happiness, of the people.

As an object of revenue, the distillery certainly has its advantages, chiefly in the view of easy collection. In any other light, it seems less important, as the grain used there, if con-

sumed in the support of any other species of industry, would afford the same, or nearly the same revenue, levied on the produce of that industry, whatever it might be.

The objection to distillation, on the score of its *moral effects*, has, I confess, always appeared to me by far the strongest counterpoise to the great benefits which it yields. When I consider the excessive indulgence in ardent spirits, which always attends their abundance ; the destruction which it occasions to the health, morals, economy, and industry, of the people ; the ruin of natural affection, and the general depravity and misery which it brings on the lower orders, and their families ; I am sometimes staggered in my prepossession of leaving all industry free, and inclined to prohibit a manufacture of poison, as I would any other public nuisance. I have need to recollect the other great benefits arising from the practice ; the general encouragement which it gives to agriculture, and the resources which it yields in occasional scarcity, before I can reconcile myself to its public toleration. In considering this objection, it is somewhat amusing to reflect on the different impression of arguments on different minds. This, which I look upon as so weighty, and indeed the only one of the



smallest weight against distilleries, has, I suppose, never been a feather in the balance in determining the legal provisions on the subject. The minds of statesmen and legislators are swayed by far other considerations. Indeed I fear I shall risk any little credit my other notions might gain, by dwelling on so simple an objection.

But however this may be, the above objection is no otherwise important to the present inquiry, than as a curious speculation; for whether the measure now proposed be adopted or not, the quantity of distilled spirit will probably not be diminished. The only question is, whether it shall be manufactured from grain or from sugar? I believe the spirit distilled from sugar is rather more noxious than that distilled from grain; but this difference is probably not so material as much to affect the argument. Neither, on the other hand, does the question of revenue enter into consideration, for the quantity of manufactured spirit, and consequently the duties, will probably remain much the same.

The interest of the Distillers seems likewise to be pretty much unconnected with the present question. For though it appears, by the evidence before the Committee, on the one hand,

that corn is in general preferred for distillation; and, on the other, that the suspension might profit individuals who have speculated in the view of its taking place; it would seem, that an arrangement of duties may make the matter pretty nearly indifferent to them as a body\*.

A new and important interest, however, has made its appearance on the present occasion, which was scarcely thought of formerly,—that of our Colonial Proprietors. They have, some time ago, applied to Parliament for assistance in their present distresses; have suggested the suspension of the corn distillery as one mode of relief; and have had sufficient influence with the Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to inquire into their case, to induce them to recommend it; after having failed in a like suggestion to a former Committee†.

\* See the evidence of Mr T. Smith (of Brentford), and Mr T. Smith (of the house of Stein, Smith, & Co.), in the Appendix to the Report, particularly p. 34-81. Mr D. Montgomerie, p. 126-8.

† “The result, therefore, of the inquiry of the Committee is, “that however strongly they may feel the distresses and the difficulties under which the West Indian trade at present labours; “however anxious they may be to recommend the adoption of “any measure which may tend to afford, even a temporary relief, “from a pressure so heavy and alarming, they do not think the “measure of permitting the use of sugar and molasses, for a time

Like all bodies too who call for monopolies, they have not limited their argument, in suggesting the present measure, to their own necessities. They have endeavoured to persuade their countrymen, that the public interest is as much concerned in the suspension of the corn distillery as that of the colonists ; and, as is usual, they have persuaded many uninterested persons that this is the case. We have been told so even from very high authority, and are daily told so in a mass of crude speculation on this subject, which now overflows the country. The Report of the Committee likewise, though, of course, it enlarges on the colonial difficulties, does, however, urge certain grounds for the adoption of the present measure, on public views, connected with the present state of our foreign relations. This makes it necessary to consider the question on general principles, as well as with a particular view to the present distresses of the colonists. Nor are such general principles confined in their application to the question now agitated, but will enable us to judge of the same, or similar proposals, at all

“ to be limited, in the breweries and distilleries, one that would  
 “ give to the West Indian trade any relief adequate to its distresses,  
 “ *consistent with the interests of other branches of the community,*  
 “ or with the safety of the revenue.” Rep. from the Distillery  
 Committee, Feb. 1807.



times and seasons. It is useful to be set right in regard to first principles, even if we should occasionally depart from them. We shall thus be better able to estimate the grounds alleged for such departure, as well as to determine its nature and limits.

The present inquiry, therefore, divides itself into two branches. The *First* involves the question, Are there any grounds, in the present circumstances of this country, independent of the distresses of the colonists, to justify the suspension of distillation from grain? The *Second* involves the question, Supposing there are no such grounds, is the interest of the sugar colonists a sufficient reason for such a measure?

The *First* or general inquiry further subdivides itself into two branches. The present circumstances of this country, unconnected with the interest of the colonists, may be considered, in the *first* place more generally, as relative to a great nation producing its own supplies, and at amity with all the world. In the *second* place, under its present peculiar aspect, as importing a part of its supplies from foreign states; while there is a chance of these supplies being interrupted, from the violence of war, in the present extraordinary combination against us.

These two branches I shall consider in the two first sections, and I think they will exhaust

all the views which have been taken of the subject unconnected with the interest of the colonists.

In the *Second* place, supposing it to be made out, that, on all and each of these general grounds, the proposed suspension of the distillery would be unadvisable, I shall next enquire, Whether the present distresses of the colonists are a sufficient ground for granting them relief, by the suspension of the distillery of grain, either in the view of justice to the home cultivator, or policy towards the public? This will form the subject of a third section.

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In all speculations regarding public measures, the great object of inquiry is the interest of the public. The interest of individuals, or classes of individuals, must be considered only as subordinate to this great interest. It is not to be inferred from this, that I maintain that injustice is to be committed towards smaller classes, when the interest of the public requires it; because I believe it to be a rule without one exception, that it never can be for the public advantage, to prefer one class before another in the free direction of their industry. In the following observations, therefore, when I speak of the interest of the home grower, or of the colo-

nist, I always speak of it, not in exclusive relation to either of those classes of individuals, but as subordinate to the interest of the public. When I speak of any thing tending to the prosperity or discouragement of our farmers, I mean only in so far as the public interest is concerned in that prosperity or discouragement. When I speak of the propriety or impropriety of granting relief to the colonists, or of the mode of relief at present suggested, I speak of it, neither with favour nor dislike towards them as a body, but only in as far as it is for the public interest that any relief, or that such relief, should be granted.

It is further to be attended to, that the measure now in agitation is not merely the free permission of importing sugar, or, what is the same thing, an equalization of the duties on sugar, and on corn, used in distilleries. It will be seen that, according to all the principles on which the following argument is maintained, I not only approve of such free importation as a temporary measure, but as a permanent system. What is proposed in the Report of the Committee, and what I object to, is the monopoly of the distilleries granted to the colonist, and the forcible exclusion of the home grower from the competition.



## SECT. I.

*Of the Operation of Distilleries in a Country which supplies its own Consumption, or affords a Surplus beyond it.*

THE operation of distilleries on a country producing its own supplies, or affording a surplus, may be considered under two views: I. In years of average home produce; and, II. In years of scarcity from deficient home produce.

I. To enlarge on the importance of a flourishing agriculture, to the strength and prosperity of a state, does not seem at present necessary; for it is a truth which the most erroneous systems of œconomical policy never could entirely hide, and is one on which the public opinion seems now to be pretty well awakened, although the general views on this subject are still far from being wholly just. The land produce of a state, though not the only source of wealth (as some of its indiscreet favourers have maintained) is at least the most important branch of it, the foundation of all the rest, and the measure of their extent and limits. In a large territory, the amount of subsistence which can be imported, must necessarily be

small \*; and as the population of a state is regulated by its means of subsistence, a large territory can only be populous in proportion to the means of subsistence which it raises within itself. It follows, that all other branches of industry, which are carried on by that population, must be regulated by the amount of the land produce. From these plain premises I do not infer (as some very able men have done) that agriculture should receive any peculiar encouragement from the law, beyond other branches of industry; because I think such encouragement can do it no good. But I infer, that it should suffer no positive restraint or discouragement to the advantage of other branches of industry; because, though some limited branch of industry may profit by such preference, the industry and prosperity of the country in general must suffer exactly in proportion as agriculture suffers.

Mr Malthus (whose profound and original speculations have formed an æra in political science) has, however, shewn, that it is not merely the *gross* amount of land produce in a state, *in proportion to the extent of territory*, which is the cause of domestic prosperity, but the *relative* amount of that produce, *in proportion to the numbers of the people*. Thus, if

\* Smith's Wealth of Nations, B. 4. c. 2.

two nations possess an equal extent of territory, and raise an equal produce, and one contain *ten millions* of inhabitants, the other *twelve millions* ; in the former, the food being divided in larger shares among the people than in the latter, the former people will enjoy greater comfort and happiness than the latter, in common and average years.

But although the *gross* amount of produce, in proportion to territory, and its *relative* amount, in proportion to population, be different things, and it be possible to conceive the gross produce, in proportion to territory, to be large, while the relative produce is small, and the people but moderately supplied (which I believe is the case in China) ; yet I imagine, in general, large *gross* produce and *relative* abundance uniformly go together, where no impolitic laws or usages encourage a superfluous population, or interrupt the commerce of grain.—Wherever these are left free to the operation of nature, a large *gross* produce is uniformly attended with a *relative* abundance among the people.

In regard, again, to the public strength of a country, as opposed to other states, it is needless to shew how much this depends on the amount of its land produce, in proportion to the land produce of other states. If two neighbouring nations are equal in extent of territory,



that which produces the largest supplies, will maintain the largest population, and a given proportion of that population will, of course, constitute a larger force than the same proportion of the other population. On the other hand, if two neighbouring nations are of unequal size, the smaller may, by a superior agriculture, support an equal population, and, of course, equal armies. In the particular circumstances, therefore, of every state, its force must be measured by the extent of its supplies. If France be twice as large as Britain, or (what, in the existing state of any two countries, is the same thing) have twice as many acres in culture, and yet Britain raise twice as much grain per acre, Britain will be as populous as France, and will be able to support equal armies.—This is supposing the gross produce of both countries to be the same; their respective numbers to be the same; and the proportion of these numbers which they maintain in war, also the same.

But, strictly speaking, the power of a nation to maintain armies does not depend so much on the amount of its population, compared with the population of other states, as on the amount of its supplies, compared with the supplies of other states. I have observed that, though population always bears a *near* relation to supply, yet it does not always bear *exactly the same* relation

to it. In one nation the supplies may be more abundant in proportion to the numbers, or, what is the same thing, the people less numerous in proportion to the supplies than in another nation. Now, in such circumstances, the nation whose abundance is the greatest, though it use its whole supplies in peace by the various modes of consumption, may, in war, by a retrenchment of its consumption, yield larger supplies than its poorer neighbour can do, to the maintenance of an army, and of those arts necessary to the supply of an army, and, of course, support a larger army. Its population, though in numbers only equal to that of its rival, yields in war a greater disposable proportion without diminishing the land produce, provided the consumption in the richer nation be diminished in the same proportion. The richer nation can support an army of 120,000 men, *equally well* appointed and supplied, as the poorer can support an army of 100,000 men.—Or, the richer nation can support an army of 100,000 men *better* appointed and supplied than the poorer nation can support the same number.

It appears, therefore, that the public strength of a state, as well as its domestic prosperity, is in proportion to the amount of its supplies.

The encouragement of a great land produce, therefore, becomes the first of all objects, towards both the domestic happiness and the public security of a state; and while on this subject, it is pleasing to reflect, that the example of our own country is the best confirmation of the above doctrines. No long settled community, of equal extent, has, perhaps, ever yielded so large a produce as Great Britain; has supported its population in such general abundance; or possessed such prodigious resources for offence and security. The average land produce of Great Britain is as much superior to that of other nations, as her manufactures and commerce\*. This she has attained, not from the perfect rectitude of her policy in regard to agriculture, but because the errors she has committed have been fewer than those committed by other nations; and the consequences of them have been more completely palliated. The first of these advantages she has derived from the influence of the public voice and interest over her public councils;

\* Mr Ar. Young (the justness and importance of whose practical observations in political economy shine through the uncertainty of his general principles) has remarked, that England has always been as much superior to France in agriculture as in other branches of industry. By his calculation, the produce of this country was to that of France when he travelled (1789-92) as 28 to 18.—See note (A.)



the second from the freedom of individual exertion, overcoming the restraints of an injudicious policy.

Such, then, being the importance of increasing the actual land produce of a country, it may be laid down as an axiom, that every positive restriction, which limits the power of the farmer to augment the land produce, is immediately injurious to him, and consequentially injurious to the community. I say every *positive restriction*, which gives the preference to some other branch of industry over his ; for, as far as respects a free competition, though that may sometimes diminish the farmer's profits in the mean time, it will be for the advantage of the community. It is only when the farmer asks some monopoly, that his interest and that of the public can ever be opposed.

It is the interest of the farmer to have an abundant produce, but yet somewhat under the demand of the market. It is the interest of the public that the produce should be abundant, and the market pretty fully supplied. In other words, the farmer wishes for plenty, and tolerably high prices ; the public for plenty, and tolerably low prices. But while, on the one hand, it is not the interest of the farmer to have too high prices, which can only proceed

from very deficient produce; on the other hand, it is not the interest of the public to have too low prices, proceeding from over-abundance, which may discourage the farmer, and induce him to retrench his cultivation. Such retrenchment naturally leads back to scarcity, and a change of this kind, from plenty to scarcity, is a much greater evil than if the produce had never exceeded the lowest point of the vibration. Though it be the interest of the public, therefore, that grain should be cheap, it never can be its interest that grain should be so cheap as to injure the cultivator. Such an over-cheapness may sometimes arise in the course of nature, by the farmer's improvident over-trading, and, in such a case, should be left to remedy itself by natural means. It will, however, scarcely ever amount to an evil, if things be left to their own course, and nothing obstruct the natural efforts of competition to relieve itself. But whenever the cheapness is produced artificially, or by forcible means, it may be pronounced pernicious, as injurious to the public in the long-run, as immediately to the grower.

Cheapness and dearness, it is to be observed, are variable terms, importing the relation between the demand and the actual supply. It is therefore impossible to fix them by any de-

finite standard, or determine when either is excessive. When matters are left free each will accurately adapt itself to the actual amount of supplies. Corn will never be cheap but when it ought to be cheap, nor cheaper than it ought to be :—It will never be dear unless when it ought to be dear, nor dearer than it ought to be. The cultivator's complaints of low prices on the one hand, or, as it is usually termed, *the want of adequate returns to the grower*, are just as unreasonable as the public complaints of high prices on the other. The return in the market, when matters are left free, must be the *adequate* and proper return, in proportion to the amount of produce. If this last be too large, the farmer has overtraded, by advancing cultivation too rapidly, and must diminish it. This is the only sense in which I use the word *over-cheapness*, when arising from natural causes, and the only remedy I would propose, however low prices might fall.

There are two modes in which the farmer's profits may be lowered, and abundance created by forced expedients, which, in a course of average seasons, have nearly the same effect ; namely, the stoppage of his market, and the increase of produce ;—the one professing to attain its end by restraint, the other by encouragement.



In the annals of legislation, we are no strangers to various schemes of policy which have professed to lower the price of grain by forced limitations of the market. The famous minister Colbert, wishing to encourage the manufactures of France, bethought himself of increasing the plenty, and lowering the price of grain, by prohibiting its export. In this way, no doubt, there was suddenly thrown back on the home market the whole quantity usually exported, and the consequence must have been an immediate plenty and cheapness. But all the effect of this was very soon over; for the farmers finding a glut of their commodity on their hands, and the prices so low as to yield them no adequate return, (an expression which in this case might be used with propriety), were forced to retrench their cultivation, and thus reduce the produce to what it was formerly, exclusive of the export. The object desired, therefore, was almost immediately defeated. But this is by no means stating the full amount of the evil. For the discouragement to agriculture, from the closing up an indefinite vent to its produce, will always diminish that produce, or prevent its gradual increase, in a proportion far beyond the actual amount consumed by that vent at the time of the restriction. The policy of M. Colbert, therefore, not merely

defeated its own end ; not merely did not promote the cheapness, and advance the industry which he favoured ; but was probably greatly injurious to it. He snatched at a hasty advantage by sacrificing the spring which was to prolong and augment it. The character of his policy (to use the illustration of Montesquieu on another subject) resembled the eagerness of the savage who, to get at the fruit, cuts down the tree.

The analogy between the above policy and that of prohibiting distillation from corn, is obvious and complete. The distillery affords the farmer a steady, convenient, and profitable market for his produce, exactly in the same way as export. It is also indefinite in extent ; and if the vent which it furnishes be in general more limited than that of export, it is nearer, more sure, and not dependent, like the other, on the demand of other states, or our connection with them. Like the former, it encourages a considerably larger produce than it actually consumes\*.

\* This opinion is distinctly expressed by that very intelligent cultivator Mr Wakefield, in his evidence before the Committee, App. to Rep. p. 109-111. The operation of even a very limited vent in encouraging produce is described by Mr A. Young, in his evidence before the Committee.—See note (B.) The quantity of grain used in the distilleries of the united kingdom, is stat-

The effect of a stoppage of this vent, like that of the other, is to throw the whole grain used there into the common market, which, while it occasions a transitory cheapness, will lower the farmer's profits, and finally reduce his cultivation to the full amount of the grain usually distilled, and probably much further.

In short, the analogy, so remarkable in other instances, between produce and population applies perfectly here. A free emigration increases the numbers of the people in the same manner as a free export, or other vent, increases produce. All attempts to force either, by direct encouragements, are unavailing. All attempts to stop their natural vents lead to the very decrease that is feared \*.

There are, however, certain reasoners who have denied that the home grower would sus-

ed in the Report to amount to 781,000 qrs. 470,000 in Britain, and 311,000 in Ireland.

\* They who doubt of the effects of a free and regular emigration in increasing numbers may, I think, be convinced by perusing Mr Malthus's account of the irruption of the barbarous nations of the north of Europe. That author has completely solved the problem of their excessive numbers, which had puzzled so many of his predecessors. Dr Ferguson has compared the attempts to increase population to the assisting a water-fall with an oar. The fears of its decay from emigration resemble the fears of the river running out, and leaving its channel dry. See this matter enlarged on, and practically applied, in Lord Selkirk's excellent treatise on the Highland Emigrations.



tain any loss from the stoppage of distillation. He would save as much, according to them, in the reduced wages of labour and poor rates, the easier maintenance of his family, &c. consequent on the cheapness, as he would lose by the fall of grain. If this be true, the price of grain is of no consequence to the farmer, and the fixation of a *maximum*, however low, would be to him a matter of indifference. By the same reasoning we may satisfy the woollen manufacturer, that a fall in the price of cloth is nothing against his interest, as he might then *clothe* his workmen, servants, and family cheaper than before. It is painful, at this time of day, to be obliged to reply seriously to such folly. Were the argument intended to convince those only whom it professes to address (the farmer or manufacturer), it would be idle, indeed, to take notice of it. Their interest and experience tell them its absurdity too plainly to allow them to be deceived. Let others be convinced, from what is observed of their conduct (if unable to see it themselves), that a forced decrease in the price of any commodity is never compensated to the dealer by the lower wages of his workmen, or any other consequences of the fall. If the farmers in this country consider the stoppage of

the distillery as a matter of indifference to them, I have done with my objections.

Such, then, will be the consequence of stopping distillation, or any other natural vent to home produce, in a course of average years. The effect of taking away a vent to produce, in case of the occurrence of scarcity, I shall afterwards attend to.

But the forced limitation of the market is not the only device that has been fallen upon to increase abundance, and lower prices. Some persons expecting to attain the same end by encouragement, as in the former case was expected by restraint, have proposed a bounty on the improvement of wastes, or breaking up grass lands. But it seems evident, that, in as far as this is *forced* beyond the natural demand of the market, the former cultivation will just suffer in proportion as the new cultivation increases; and the supplies will merely be raised in different places, while their aggregate amount will remain the same. But, indeed, any encouragement of this kind must be so insignificant, that I rather think it will produce no effect at all. The effects of such a measure as to scarcity, and with the view of diminishing importation, I shall afterwards consider.

But while the direct encouragement of home produce is unavailing, or injurious to the farm-

er, and, in neither view, will lead to any increase of supplies, all obstacles to its free progress should be removed. This is indeed the whole length that the encouragement to improving wastes, or turning grass lands into tillage, should or can go ; and, while thus free, the interest of the farmer and the public always go together.

The farmer, like the undertaker of every other branch of industry, must lay his account with the competition of every other person who pursues the same, or any other trade, in a lawful manner. If any other person pursue his trade in the way of breaking up waste lands, he does no more than he is entitled to, and has no preference over those who cultivate the more improved soils. The too rapid cultivation of wastes is a thing impossible, if left wholly to private interest and industry, because the inducement to that practice is only in proportion to the high price, or scarcity of land produce ; and as the scarcity is relieved, or prices fall, the inducement to cultivate wastes must fall in proportion. The operation of improving wastes must therefore be gradual, and suited to the public demands. The public demands, on the other hand, will adjust themselves to this natural and permanent increase of produce, and the community will receive a



lasting benefit, while the class of cultivators will suffer no injury.

An analogy has been drawn from the plan of increasing supplies by the above means, to that of increasing them by the suspension of the distilleries; and although there be a difference between them in the view of scarcity, as shall afterwards be shewn, yet in the continuance of average supplies, I think the analogy may be admitted. The interference in regard to both is equally wrong; the farmer is injured by both; and the public will ultimately be so too; only, as the power of the Legislature can operate much more surely in suspending the distillery than in forcing improvement, the injurious effects of the former will be more strongly felt. On the other hand, as the free competition of the culture of wastes can do no harm, neither can the free admission of the colonial produce into the distilleries\*.

Another mode of increasing the home supplies, from which an analogy has been drawn to the suspension of the distilleries, is the importation of corn. This case just resembles the last. If importation were promoted by a bounty, or other encouragement, while there was no call for it from scarcity, it would be equally wrong with the forced importation of

\* See Note (C.)

sugars by the suspension of the distilleries. Did any of our colonists grow rice, and did we give it some exclusive encouragement in our market, the case would be just the same, at least in average seasons. Such encouragements, however, never have been given to foreign growers. They are never even allowed the fair competition of our market, (which I think both they and the colonial proprietors ought to be), but all that they send in common years is loaded with heavy duties. Were the colonists at present asking no more favour than the utmost that has been ever extended to the foreign growers of corn, during average years, I should be far from objecting to their demands.

The discouragement of the British grower, therefore, from the improvement of wastes or importation, can never bear any resemblance to his discouragement from the stoppage of his market, while the one is free, the other compulsive.

II. I have thus, I think, sufficiently shewn the beneficial effect of distilleries, and other vents, in encouraging cultivation in common and average years; and the injurious consequence of a forced suspension of them, both to the home grower and the public. I now proceed to inquire into the nature of their opera-

tion in seasons of scarcity, and the consequence of their suspension in such an event. The scarcity to which I at present allude, is that which arises from deficient home produce, as I am now considering the question abstracted from the circumstance of importation.

They who have given the attention which it deserves to the excellent work of Mr Malthus, must be aware of the uniform relation maintained between the population of any country and its means of support; of the constant tendency of the former to encroach upon the latter; and of the inadequacy of the utmost assignable produce in any country to maintain the people in plenty and happiness, unless the natural tendency to increase be repressed by some forcible check, either directly or indirectly, a certain length below the means of subsistence.

Whenever the means of subsistence, however, are, from any cause, unusually abundant, and the people enjoy great comparative ease and comfort, the disposition to early marriage will speedily augment their numbers, which will rise till they begin to press against the limits of subsistence. This will bring a gradual decrease in the comforts of the people, and again reduce their numbers, till they fall below the decreased means of support, and are then



prepared to oscillate as before. This natural oscillation is far from being a light evil, as the periodical sufferings of scarcity greatly overbalance the additional comforts enjoyed in seasons of great abundance; so that, upon the whole, it would be far better for a people to have a steady supply, though not larger than the lowest amount in the scale of vibration just stated. Yet the evil, though far from light, would be trifling compared with what it really amounts to, were the products of the soil exposed to no other casualty than such a gradual periodical vibration as the above, only influenced by the increase or decrease of population. Were the products of the soil, like the products of other manufactures, wholly dependent on the exertions of man, they might suit themselves pretty accurately to the demand throughout every year, or series of years, and increase or diminish the supplies to a known and definite amount. But in determining the amount of land produce, another power must co-operate, over which man has no controul, namely, the influence of the seasons. This may occasion a sudden disproportion in the supplies, which can occur in no branch of industry wholly dependent on human exertion; while, at the same time, a deficiency of supply in this can much less be endured than in any other. It is

not, therefore, a sufficient security against famine that a nation yields such a produce as to maintain all its people moderately in average years, if that produce really be all consumed as human food. It is necessary that a considerable surplus be raised for consumption in some other way than as human food, which may exist as a resource on a sudden deficiency, and may be thus turned from whatever other purpose it was destined for, to the use of man. To dispose of this surplus in average years, the following methods seem to be the chief: 1. Storing up in granaries at the public expence, to be opened in times of scarcity. 2. Storing up by private individuals engaged in the commerce of grain. 3. A degree of waste in consumption and preparation, as the food of man, and the maintenance of inferior animals for luxury, which may be denominated *profuse consumption*. 4. Export to foreign countries; and, 5. The distillery and brewery. In the two first of these ways, superfluous produce is disposed of by *accumulation*, in the three last by *consumption*.

If the grain disposed of in any or all of these ways amount nearly to the utmost deficiency to be expected from an unfavourable season, the security against extreme want is as great as the nature of things will permit. They all serve

the double purpose of an indefinite vent and encouragement to increased production in common years; and of a security against scarcity, both by repressing the over-increase of population in common years, and by yielding, in bad seasons, for the food of man, the supplies which were raised for their market.

1. The first of these methods of disposing of surplus produce, the storing up in public granaries, is by far the worst of the whole; and never need be resorted to in any country where impolitic restrictions do not impede the natural operation of the rest. When such a system of public storing is adopted, it can only be carried into effect by means of a tax on the people; and we may be sure that the fund so raised will be expended under the direction of Government, with much less judgment and economy, and the grain purchased will be much worse preserved, and more improperly applied, than if the same end were pursued by individuals engaged in the commerce of grain, under the free protection of the law. Their own interest will direct such men when and how far to purchase and store up, and when and how far to sell, in the manner best for the interest of the community. Accordingly, in most of the civilized nations of the world, the duty of storing up has been pretty much relinquished by go-



vernment, and left to individual dealers. In the despotic and barbarous nations of the East, however, where agriculture labours under so many oppressions, the practice is still adhered to from necessity. In China, where an unwieldy government, and absurd prejudices among the people, combine to fetter internal industry, and forbid the export of corn, the practice of storing up grain for the public is carried to a considerable length; and, at the same time, we learn its inefficacy to relieve the frequent scarcities which occur in that country. We are told, that when a scarcity occurs, and the emperor's granaries are ordered to be opened, they are often found nearly empty, from the knavery of those having charge of them. Many difficulties are thrown in the way of transporting the grain, and the poor people are allowed to die in such numbers, as to reduce them within the limits of the subsistence which they can procure for themselves\*. These evils, though, perhaps, aggravated from the bad government of China, are inherent in all such schemes of preserving a public supply. As already said, such schemes can never be needed

\* See Barrow's Account of China, and Life of Lord Macartney.

where that matter is entirely committed to free individual exertion.

2. It has been the policy of all barbarous governments to discourage large dealers in corn, from the idea that their accumulation of grain might produce artificial scarcity; and this policy, with other prejudices of the same kind, has thrown the task, as already hinted, into much worse hands, that of the governments themselves. I need not mention the follies which have filled our statute-book on this subject, nor the disgraceful prejudices which appeared upon it during the last scarcity; even in those whose public station left no excuse for their ignorance. It is only, indeed, because our laws have yielded to the general feeling of public interest, and are not enforced, that we are not all made sensible of their mischief. Were corn-dealers generally to be prevented from purchasing, or forced to sell, at the will of the Legislature, or of judges, we should feel by experience the miseries of deficient supply. The interest of the corn-dealer, where he is left free, necessarily, in all respects, coincides with that of the public. It leads him to accumulate when corn is cheap, and thus takes an useless surplus out of the market; and to sell sparingly as scarcity increases, which diminishes consump-

tion, and preserves the supplies from absolute failure before the ensuing crop. Any interference with this operation by the law must, as far as it goes, produce mischief to the public as well as to him \*.

3. The vent of a luxurious home consumption in the food of man, and the inferior animals, is probably in all countries the most important resource in seasons of scarcity. It is both the greatest in extent, and has the singular advantage of being less liable to interruption than the rest from the interference of governments. The degree of waste in the preparation of food by the richer orders of society; the maintenance of a number of horses, and other animals, for luxury; as well as the over abundant feeding of those which are necessary; all occasion a vast consumption of corn, and of herbage, from land that may be turned to corn, which in common years disposes of a large surplus, beyond the necessary consumption of man; in so far represses the population in those years; and affords an important supply to be set free for the use of man in times of scarcity. Those well meaning persons who lament the waste of luxury, and the number of useless ani-

\* See Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, B. 4. c. 5.



mals that consume the food of man in this country, may hence see how ill-founded are their regrets and apprehensions. Were every useless horse sent out of the kingdom, the number of those useful diminished as far as possible, and were all fed in the most frugal manner, the plenty of the people would no doubt be in the mean time increased; but the population quickly augmenting, (as well as produce diminishing in various ways, from so absurd a measure,) the people would soon arrive at the same point of relation to the means of support, and their comforts would remain unaltered. All the advantage would be an actual increase of numbers even in common years. But if a scarcity were to occur, the situation of the people would be much worse. There would be no produce raised beyond what was annually consumed by man; any retrenchment from the usual moderate supply would occasion the severest suffering; and deficiency to any considerable amount would create absolute famine. Accordingly, it is in China, where the inferior animals are extremely few in proportion to man, that this dreadful calamity most frequently occurs. In Great Britain, where the number of the inferior animals in proportion to man is unusually large, scarcity has proba-

bly been less felt than in any country on the globe\*.

It may be said, indeed, that the food wasted in luxurious preparation, or consumed by the lower animals, in common years, is a resource in time of scarcity, only on the supposition that the waste is then retrenched, and the consumption of the lower animals diminished or suspended at such a season; whereas, the rich, it may be said, will continue to pamper themselves and their useless horses, though the people should starve. But to this it may be replied, that the interests of the public are fortunately not left to depend on the feelings of moral duty on such occasions, but are enforced

\* The consumption of the aggregate number of horses kept in Great Britain, has been calculated by a very competent judge, Dr Coventry, Professor of Agriculture in the University of Edinburgh, in an estimate which he has favoured me with, at the produce of *sixteen millions of acres*, which, at the rate of *four quarters per acre*, might yield *sixty-four millions of quarters of grain*. In thus explaining, however, the use of a number of horses, or other inferior animals, I would not be understood to approve of that waste of labour which we often see, especially in England, in the employment of unnecessary horses for carriage or agriculture. These, in regard to labour, are absolutely useless, yielding neither profit nor pleasure; and though the keeping of them we see has some advantage, it is paying too dear for it. We might as well throw the grain they consume into the sea. Besides, if dismissed, they would probably not altogether disappear, but be turned to more useful purposes.

by the infallible provisions of nature. The rise of prices, which must happen on a scarcity, will force the rich, in spite of themselves, to retrench their superfluities; and it is in the admitting of this retrenchment that the habitual existence of a superfluity is so useful. The delicacies of the table must be retrenched, the maintenance of all inferior animals must be reduced, and the number of those merely kept for luxury or convenience must be lessened, through all classes of the community, (except, perhaps, among a small number of the most affluent) by the natural pressure of scarcity and high prices, however ill disposed individuals may be to such retrenchments; and the food raised to supply the luxurious consumption, will necessarily be turned to the use of man\*.

#### 4. The export to foreign countries. when

\* The above considerations (as already hinted) may relieve the fears of certain well meaning people, as to the political evils at least (contradistinguished from the moral evils) of excessive luxury. The greater the general luxurious consumption of a country, the better is it secured against the risk of scarcity; nor can it go to a further extreme in this respect, than will be for its its own advantage.

Neither can I help taking notice of the amusing inconsistency of certain reasoners, who in one breath lament the luxury and corruption of the times, and the next exclaim against the load of taxes. Now it is very apparent, that the more we are relieved of taxes, the more luxurious, and (as far as it depends on luxury) the more corrupted we shall become.



the state of our produce admits of it, affords no doubt a very useful vent. In as far, therefore, as perfect freedom of export goes, this vent ought to be encouraged ; but, it is less to be relied on than those which exist within the country. For, in the *first* place, it depends for its continuance on the state of supplies in the foreign importing countries ; and should their agricultural produce increase, so as to equal their demands, our market with them must gradually be closed. The plan of persisting to force a market by a bounty on export, has been recommended by very able men \* ; yet I cannot but think it a vain and frivolous attempt, useless, if our produce be so abundant as naturally to yield a surplus for export, and ineffectual, if it be not. *Secondly*, not only is the vent of export subject to this gradual stoppage, by the natural rise in the prosperity of the foreign countries ; but if on a scarcity at home this exported surplus be retained for our own necessities, the importing nations whom we used to supply, on finding that we withdraw this supply occasionally for our own relief, will suffer so much that they will cease to depend on it, and use every exertion to increase their home growth, or seek for their supplies elsewhere. *Thirdly*, a year of

\* Malthus, Essay on Pop. B. 3. c. 7—10.

plenty may occur, as well as of scarcity. In a year of plenty, the foreign market may not extend to admit of an enlarged export. It may even be interrupted by temporary causes. A glut then returns upon our own market, which discourages cultivation so as to reduce our produce to our own supply. The vent of export, therefore, depends on variable causes, and has not that principle of continuance, nor that power of suiting itself to circumstances, which the modes of home consumption possess.

While, therefore, for the above reasons, I think the vent of export less to be depended on than the other vents which we command at home; and that it is idle to attempt its encouragement by a positive bounty; I still consider it to be a very useful resource, when the state of our home produce, compared with that of other countries, naturally leads to it. It should be encouraged as far as perfect freedom of export goes; and while, on the one hand, I disapprove of its extension by a bounty; on the other hand, I think it should never be impeded, even in seasons of scarcity, but left to suit itself naturally to our home demand. The analogy between this and the other forms of disposing of superfluous produce, is complete. The interest of the corn dealer in exporting, is precisely similar to his interest in accu-

mutating. He never will export when high prices make it his interest, and the interest of the public, that he should accumulate. He regulates the one and the other in the way most beneficial to himself and the public, when left wholly free. It is as inexpedient to impede or controul him in regard to the one, as in regard to the other.

5. The distillery and brewery afford a vent to the home produce, which resembles all the former, and, as far as it goes, is attended with the very same good effects. In average years, it takes out of the market a certain quantity of corn beyond what is necessary for human subsistence, thus encouraging increased produce, and repressing population; and when scarcity occurs, it yields this surplus to be turned to human food. As formerly hinted, too, this disposal of superfluous produce, like the three first mentioned, has an advantage over the vent of foreign export, as affording a market nearer, more certain, more under the eye of the farmer, and less dependent on our relations to other states, or their internal regulation and prosperity. While always ready to give up its consumption naturally when necessity requires, and to yield the produce raised for that consumption to the use of man, it is a market equally ready to revive on the recur-



rence of plenty, to suit its consumption to the state of produce, and thus equalize the supplies throughout successive years. The operation of distilleries in this way is precisely analogous to that of the corn dealer and exporter, and the prejudices on the one subject exactly resemble those on the other \*.

The result of the above observations seems to be, that the four latter modes of superfluous consumption (which have a strong analogy to each other) are all eminently useful in common years, as affording an encouragement to land produce, while they somewhat repress the consequent increase of population; and, on the recurrence of scarcity, yield a sure and valuable resource. That while, on the one hand, it is absurd to encourage them for the interest of cultivation by positive bounties; on the other hand, it is wrong to repress them for the public supply, even in the greatest necessity, because they then naturally suit themselves to the public wants in the best possible manner, when left alone.

In applying the above general principles more particularly to the measure of suspending the corn distillery, now in agitation, it is natural to inquire, *First*, Whether there does at present exist any necessity for throwing the

\* See Note (D.)

grain usually consumed there into the common market, from a scarcity of provisions? *Secondly*, If not, what will be the consequence of doing so prematurely, and before the necessity comes? and, *Thirdly*, Even in the case of actual pressure from scarcity, should such a compulsive measure ever be resorted to?

*First*, As to the existing state of our home supplies, that there is at present any deficiency of these, the current rate of prices abundantly disproves. The wheat crop reaped last autumn in this country, it is generally allowed, was rather an abundant crop; and indeed this fact, as I take it, is proved in the best of all ways, by the rate of prices just alluded to. We are now nine months from the last harvest, and within three of the next, and the market price of wheat, which is our regulating standard, is as low, or rather lower, than it has been on an average of these several years past; a mere trifle above what it was immediately after the the last harvest; and very nearly stationary since the month of November. The price in the London market, on the 16th of the present month of May, was from 50 to 78 shillings the quarter. The price for the preceding month of April, was from 64 to 74 shillings; that for October last, from 54 to 68; that of May last, from 64 to 80; that of May 1806, from 70 to

84; that of May 1805, from 80 to 100. Yet on none of those occasions was there any idea of stopping distillation, though the prices were often a good deal higher than at present. In short, the prices are at this moment lower than they have been, at an average, for some years past, and have not risen materially since last harvest. There is at present rather an abundance than a scarcity in the country\*.

It is no doubt true, that oats and barley are comparatively at high prices, but this is obviously nothing to the purpose in the view of scarcity; and is besides owing to temporary causes, which cannot be expected to influence another crop. In the view of scarcity, it is not the relative abundance or price of particular kinds of produce; still less of the smaller and less important; but the actual amount of the whole consumable produce in the country, or the standard price of bread-corn, that is the

\* See a Statement of the Prices of Corn for some years past, Note (E.). The abundance of the last crop of wheat, the present moderate state of prices, the small import, and the sufficiency of this country to supply itself, are also stated by Mr Wakefield, App. to Rep. p. 110. Mr Claud Scott, p. 116-17. Mr Kent, p. 121. Mr Mackenzie, p. 122-3-4. By far the best proof, however, of the present comparative plenty, is the state of prices, for several years past, given in the Note. The prices are given for two months in each year,—October, when the crop recently gathered may be supposed to have produced its full effect, and May, which corresponds with the present time.



only matter of importance. The abundance of the people depends on the quantity of human subsistence; and it is idle to talk of the people suffering from the want of oats and barley, when wheat is plenty. The distillers have, it is said, in some places, tried to introduce wheat into their manufacture, yet even this has not sensibly affected the price of that article.

But further, the present relative scarcity and high prices of oats and barley, have arisen from temporary causes;—partly from both being comparatively an under crop last season, particularly in Scotland;—partly from the general failure of the pulse crop;—and partly from the sudden demand from the distilleries, which the prospect of the present measure has occasioned. None of these causes can be reckoned upon for another season\*.

That there is no call for stopping the distillation from any *present* want of subsistence in the country, is therefore apparent. The people are at present eating bread as cheap as they have done for some years past, indeed rather cheaper; and no ground now exists for

\* Notwithstanding these causes, (as to which all the agricultural gentlemen agree), the price of barley, though certainly high, does not seem to be very extravagant. See Statement of Prices, Note (E.): and Mr Mackenzie's Evidence, App. to Rep. p. 125.

such a measure, that has not existed for all that time.

That there may be want in some particular districts at present, I will not deny. This may be a good reason for affording them relief from the abundance of other districts, but is none for a general measure like stopping distillation, when the state of prices shews that there is a general plenty in the country.

But, *secondly*, It is said, that although no scarcity now exists, the present or future crops may fail. It may then exist; and we must take precautions against that event.

To this I reply, that the present or future crops have as good a chance of being abundant as deficient. This is a contingency which no man can foresee; and there can be no reason for taking the precaution now, which will not always exist. This system of *perpetual precaution*, therefore, just amounts to a standing prohibition of the distillery of grain.

But in case the calamity of deficient produce should at some future time actually befall us, what will be the effect of this premature precaution? The grain raised for distillation being forced back on the grower, or dealer, and the general prices falling, he will cease to raise the same quantity by the whole amount of what was usually distilled, probably

by a good deal more. This quantity will therefore disappear from the market. If it had been displaced by corn, even forcibly encouraged from waste lands, or imported by a bounty, as formerly mentioned, the same, or nearly the same, quantity of subsistence would still have been within the country ; and that part of it consumed by the distillery, would still have remained to be set free for human use on the occurrence of scarcity. But, in the present case, the grain displaced, is replaced by sugar, a commodity which, in the utmost necessity, cannot be turned to human support. No resource will therefore remain from the suspension of distillation, when necessity shall call for that measure, if we now adopt it without any necessity.

But, *thirdly*, it may be said, that it is no longer time to betake ourselves to this resource, when the necessity has arrived, for then the corn will have been actually distilled. To this I reply, that there will be abundant time to take the precaution ; and, indeed, the remedy will apply itself in the best way, without any such precaution. The grain raised for distillation is not all distilled in one day or week ; it is done gradually. As grain becomes scarce, and prices rise, it will be distilled more slowly every day, because the dis-



tiller can less afford to purchase it, or, if he has purchased, he will cease to distil it, as spirits fall in price, from the people giving up the consumption of them\*. This will happen the sooner, if the importation of sugar be at the same time free. The distiller will thus either leave his stores to the corn-dealer, or become the corn-dealer himself. The evil thus necessarily cures itself, without any public interference. In the same manner, at such seasons the luxurious consumption of individuals will be retrenched; superfluous horses will be underfed, or dismissed; export will cease; the corn-dealer will be enabled to accumulate, as far as his capital will permit; and the more he accumulates, the greater is the public security, that the scarcity will not be increased to famine. No stoppage *can* be put to luxurious consumption, farther than what moral duty and interest enforce. None *should* be put to export or

\* This idea is very justly expressed by Mr Ferguson, in his evidence before the Committee. "I cannot judge with regard to the powers of merchants in importing grain; but it has always appeared to me, that one of the greatest and best founded securities against the effects of a famine, is to promote the flourishing of the distilleries, the consequence of which would be, that when a famine really occurred, people would give up the use of spirits, which is not a necessary of life, and leave the grain for food, which used in favourable years to be applied to the production of spirits."—App. to Rep. p. 158.

distillation, otherwise a part of the produce is forced on the market, which there is no capital to store up, and retrenchment is prevented from taking place among the people so soon as it ought to do. Corn will never be exported, when a good price can be got at home :—It will never be distilled, when it can be sold higher for food. No stop *should* be put to the accumulation of the corn-dealer, whose storing up helps to enforce early retrenchment, and whose stores come forth as scarcity increases, and prevent that extreme of misery which a rash overconsumption would have occasioned. The same rule of perfect freedom equally applies to all these modes of consumption. The arrangements of nature need no assistance from the feeble and presumptuous efforts of man, whose interference only disturbs what it cannot amend. In the system of human improvement, that knowledge, I believe, is as important and as slowly acquired, which informs us what we cannot do, as that which informs us what we can.

It may perhaps be prudent to prohibit export and distillation, when these vents are nearly closing of their own accord, to pacify the excusable prejudices of the people in times of severe scarcity. As to the corn-dealer, no interference with him should ever be attempted. The people may be assured, that any

immediate relief received in that way will sooner or later lead to aggravated misery\*.

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It appears, on the whole, then, that the operation of distilleries is to lead to an augmentation of produce, beyond the amount which they consume; and that they should never be suspended, except in extreme necessity, which does not at present exist, nor is likely to exist, (from deficient home produce,) in this country.

The above doctrines seem to be just, with regard to a country which produces the full supply of its inhabitants. But some persons conceive, that the circumstance of our importing a part of our subsistence from abroad, together with the present strange and gloomy aspect of our foreign relations, alters the application of the above principles, and justifies a departure from them now, which, at other times, might be wrong. This leads me to the second branch of my inquiry, in which I shall endeavour to shew, that our peculiar situation, as an importing country, makes no exception to the principles above laid down, but rather lends them additional weight.

\* There is not a more irrational sentiment than one which we often see entertained, of indignation at the profits of farmers and corn-dealers. There is no class of the community in whose hands the accumulation of capital tends so directly to the public good.



## SECT. II.

*Of the Operation of Distilleries in a Country which imports a part of its Supplies.*

THE operation of distilleries, with respect to importation, may be considered under two views, analogous to those taken in the last section.—I. In regard to average years of importation, that is, where our supplies from abroad are liable to no interruption.—II. In regard to years of interruption to our foreign supplies; which may proceed either from a bad season in the exporting country, or from war.

I. It is not material to the present question, that I should ascertain very accurately the amount of our importation, in proportion to our demand, for some years back. It has never, I believe, been determined with great certainty; and though my own suspicion is, that it is considerably smaller than has been supposed, I feel little concern in the inquiry, even in a general view, because I think it a matter of very trifling moment\*. I am disposed to agree

\* The average amount of corn imported into this country, for five years past, is stated in the Report at 770,000 quarters.—See note (F.) But from this must be deducted our exports, to ascertain the balance of import. Our exports to the colonies are stated at note (G.)

with Dr Smith, that the imported supplies of a large territory never can bear any considerable proportion to its consumption ; still less in a country like this, where the agriculture is superior to that of any on the globe. I believe the importation does not now amount, nor is ever likely to amount, nearly to the supply which is carried off by the various modes of superfluous consumption in average years. I believe, therefore, we may regard, without much apprehension, the utmost possible limits to which importation can extend.

There have been very able heads, however, who have entertained different notions. Mr Malthus, in particular, augurs, from the progressive increase of importation, the gradual decline of our own agriculture, and the final ruin of the country \*. And this view, it is to be observed, is distinct from the advantages of an export, and the loss of subsisting by import, in case of a *sudden* deficiency of home produce : For this length I am not unwilling to go ; though I think the danger, even here, less than is commonly apprehended. But the above author surely argues with an inconsistency very unusual with him, when he in one page prognosticates the progressive decline of our agricul-

\* Essay on Pop. B. 3. c. 9, 10. 4to edit.

ture, from *the progressive increase of import to a great extent*; and, in the next, founds upon Dr Smith's assumption, that in an extensive country, importation *never can be carried far*. This is not the time for exposing farther the above fallacy; nor is it, indeed, any part of my business so to do: for the greater the amount of our importation;—the more likely it is to extend;—and the more ruinous the consequences to follow from it;—the more useful is the vent of distillation, and the more inexpedient the stoppage of it.

I am fairly entitled to use the argument of the disadvantage of importation against the supporters of the present measure, as they have enlarged on the danger of that circumstance, and have, indeed, approved of the stoppage of the distilleries, as the means of lessening it. Many great authorities have agreed in the same notions respecting importation; and although I cannot go their length on general views, I certainly consider the opposite state of produce, which yields an export, as more desirable, (when the natural circumstances of a country lead to it,) chiefly as a resource against the occasional deficiency of home supplies. Assuming, therefore, that it would be better for us were the balance of our corn trade with foreign nations turned the other way; or, at least, that



we supplied ourselves; the question comes to be, Is the operation of distilleries favourable or unfavourable towards diminishing importation, and attaining this end?

In the former section I endeavoured to shew, that the effect of every indefinite vent for home produce was progressively to increase that produce, and that in a larger proportion than the vent actually consumed: and, on the other hand, that the forcible stoppage of any vent, not merely diminished the produce to the amount thereby consumed, but much further. The vent of free export, when a country yields a surplus for that purpose, creates an additional supply, much larger than the surplus actually exported; and, on the other hand, when this vent is shut up (as was done by Colbert) it will probably diminish produce, not merely to the amount which had been usually exported, but much further.

Exactly the same principle applies to distilleries, and that whether the country where they are permitted possess also a surplus to export, or whether, like this country, it need imported supplies. The distilleries yield an indefinite vent to home produce, and probably create a much further production than they consume themselves; and, on the other hand, the stoppage of this vent will occasion a great

er diminution of produce than they consume themselves. The vent of the distilleries is chiefly for our home produce, and, of course, is an encouragement to our home growers. It is stated in the Report of the Committee, and probably with truth, that little or no imported grain is used there. The more therefore this market is extended, the greater chance will our home growers have of increasing their produce, of gradually forcing the foreign importation out of the market, and finally turning the balance the other way. On the other hand, the stoppage of distillation in so far diminishes the capital of our home growers, lessens their produce to a greater amount than was consumed by that vent, and in so far gives a greater advantage in the competition to the grower of foreign corn.

The same causes, in short, which lead to an increase of home produce in a country which produces its own supplies, or exports a surplus, lead equally to such increase in a country that imports; and tend to diminish importation. The vent of the distillery is one of these causes; tends obviously to diminish importation; and, as far as that is an evil, is therefore more essential in a country where importation prevails, than in one which supplies itself.

Mr Malthus accordingly, and others who join with him in the apprehension of an in-

creased dependence on foreign supplies, have proposed, as the means of preventing this evil, a bounty on the export of corn ; thus endeavouring, for the encouragement of the farmer, to *force a vent* for his produce which did not exist of itself. That author must be a little surprised to see persons, professing the same opinion with him, endeavouring to attain the same end by *stopping up a vent* for home produce in the suspension of distilleries. I am far from approving of the first of those measures, because I think it, as commonly applied, *ineffectual* toward either encouraging home produce, or diminishing importation ; and, if raised, so absurdly high as to produce a temporary effect that way, would be *pernicious*. The same objections stated in last section to the attempt of forcing *cultivation*, in the view of increasing produce, apply to the attempt to force *cultivation* or *export*, in the view of diminishing importation. I think the evil of importation is not such as to require any remedy, and, if it did, that the remedy proposed would not cure the evil. But, certainly, on the principles of those who hold the necessity of forcible means to diminish importation, the plan of a bounty on production or export, a direct encouragement to home produce, seems more feasible than the stoppage of the distillery, a direct



discouragement to it. I believe the former will not do the good intended, but it will at least not increase the evil feared, which the latter assuredly will.

While on this subject, I cannot help adding one observation. The Legislature, influenced by the fears of a decreasing home produce, lately returned to the measure of granting a bounty on the export of corn, after having formerly virtually taken it away \*. I do not inquire whether this was a wise measure or not; but surely those by whom it was adopted considered it as an encouragement to the British farmer, and that the British farmer stood in need of such encouragement. But if the state of our home produce was such as to require this forcible enlargement of its market, and if it still continues to need it, with what consistency can the same Legislature forcibly close another market to this produce, much more beneficial, I believe, than all the advantage it has reaped from the bounty? Both of these expedients may be wrong, as I believe they are; but it is quite impossible, I should think, that both can be right.

\* By the Corn Act of 1773. By this act, the bounty price was lowered from 48s. to 44s. the quarter. The same rate was continued by the Corn Act 1791. It was again raised by the late act in 1804.

But it is said by some persons, that the corn displaced by the present measure from the distillery, and thrown on the market of general consumption, will not disappear from the country, but will only displace in its turn so much of the imported corn. To this, however, it is an obvious reply, that if our home growers cannot at the present prices compete with the foreign growers, and wholly prevent importation, they will still less be able to do so when prices are further reduced by the stoppage of the distillery. Nobody surely imagines that the small importation which we at present need arises from our having no spare land to produce it ourselves. It is because, in the present circumstances of the country, foreign growers can supply us with that small quantity cheaper than our home growers can supply us : And it is proper the foreign growers should do so, when the circumstances of the country naturally require it. It is clear, therefore, that if importation be no further burdened than at present, the foreign growers will quickly displace our home growers to the whole amount set free from distillation, probably somewhat farther.

Here, however, the advocates of a restrictive policy are at no loss ; but, according to

their usual mode, proceed to rectify one error by committing another. They have a beautiful scale of gradations regarding home and foreign prices, whereby they relieve nature of her cares for man, and take into their own skilful hands the adaptation of his wants and supplies \*. As prices are *forced down* by the stoppage of the distillery, the duties on importation are *forced up*, and the discouragement of our home grower is compensated by the equal discouragement of the foreign grower. This plan, therefore, proceeds on the grand principle of the mercantile system, the advancing ourselves, not by a just protection of our own industry, but by repressing that of others. But, like all the feeble and meddling devices of that policy, it will produce the mischief without the good intended. The foreign grower will be injured, but the home grower will not be relieved in the same proportion. The free vent of distillation will not nearly be made up to him by all the rise of duties on the imported corn. He will raise less than he did; less will be imported than before, from the additional duty; the prices on both will rise, and the general supply of the country will be diminished.

\* In arranging this scale our landed interest have too much interfered, and have set an ill example, which is now turned against themselves.



But even supposing, what will not happen, that, by the rise of duty on importation, the whole corn set free from the distillery is forced on the common market, and displaces foreign produce to that extent, so that the home grower suffers nothing, and the general amount of subsistence raised in the country remains the same ;—what happens in the case of a deficient season? There is no fund fit for human subsistence consumed in the distillery. The article used there is sugar, which cannot on any necessity be turned to such a purpose. In so far, therefore, as that fund goes, the public is deprived of the resource altogether.

The way in which the British farmer will be enabled (if ever) to displace the foreign grower in the home market, and, perhaps, to turn the scale of exportation the other way, is not by giving him the vain encouragement of a bounty : still less by forcibly closing any of the vents to his produce, even if, to make amends, the foreign grower is also repressed at the expence of the public ;—but by permitting him the free disposal of his produce, protecting him in the exercise of all his rights, removing obstructions in his way, avoiding all further interference in his concerns, and leaving him to the natural competition of the market.

I think it is then pretty clearly made out, that the effect of distilleries, in average years of

importation, is to lead to a progressive increase of home produce, and consequently to a progressive diminution of import; and that their suspension tends directly the other way. But it is said, that although this may be the case when there is no probability of the sudden interruption of supplies, yet, in the present strange and melancholy aspect of public affairs, when we must expect the certain suspension of supplies from abroad, it is advisable to throw the grain usually consumed in distillation, into the common market. This I shall now consider.

II. The sudden failure of supplies from abroad, may be occasioned either by a deficient season there, or by the shutting of their ports against us in war. With regard to both, I think it may be shewn in the *first* place, That there is no such probability of either taking place, at present, as to call for any change in our policy; and *secondly*, If they should take place, at a future time, that the best way of preventing their bad consequences is to continue, not to suspend, the distillation from grain, as a general system. And even if the deficiency should happen during next season, that the forcible suspension of the distillery is unnecessary.

With regard to a bad season in the exporting countries, it is an accident which we cannot look forward to with certainty, any more than

to a bad season at home. The argument formerly applied to the one equally applies to the other. If we are to abolish distillation at present, on such a contingency, we may abolish it always. If the contingency does not happen when expected, we have not only taken a needless step, but have deprived ourselves of the resource which would have relieved us when it did happen. When the pressure is felt it is time to apply the remedy; and even then, the less we interfere the better, as the remedy will apply itself.

The chance of a failure of supplies from the shutting up of the ports of Europe and America, is one which, being chiefly in view at present, will require a somewhat fuller consideration; although the very same principles apply to it as to the failure from a deficient season abroad or at home.

When we look with such apprehension to the failure of foreign supplies, as many persons do at present, it is natural to inquire, in the *first* place, into the probability of that event happening, so as to give us any material distress: and towards determining this point, the experience of the last nine months is peculiarly instructive. The whole ports of the Continent, from which we usually received supplies of grain, have been under the controul of our



enemies, as far as such controul can be carried, ever since the last harvest was reaped. As far as the strictest embargo could prevent it, therefore, all supplies to this country have been stopped since that time. America, the only other country from which we receive supplies, has, more lately, adopted the same measure ; and, (although I still hope the returning reason of both countries will prevent a rupture so injurious to both), the embargo there has been for some time enforced as strictly as the government could enforce it. Yet, what has been the consequence of all this? The price of bread-corn, as formerly mentioned, is at this moment rather lower than the average of some years past ; has continued nearly stationary since last harvest ; and we are now within three months of the next without any sensible rise.

The inference which I draw from this is, either that our importation is so small in proportion to our home supplies as to be absolutely insignificant ; or, that the utmost power of governments, stimulated by all the bitterness of human violence and folly, cannot obstruct those great provisions of nature, by which an over produce tends towards the place of demand, and thus equalizes supply, and relieves the mutual wants of mankind. Either of the above alternatives relieves us from any fear of mate-

rial deficiency from the interruption of foreign supplies\*.

As, in the last Section, therefore, I concluded that it would be unreasonable to take the precaution of stopping the distilleries on the possibility of a scanty future produce; so I may now conclude that it would be as unreasonable to take it on the possibility of a failure of imports; from which, it appears, we have a greater security than we can have in regard to the season.

But in the *second* place, supposing that such deficiency of the usual importation should happen to a considerable amount, is the immediate suspension of distilleries a likely way of guarding us against its effects? The arguments formerly applied to cases of sudden deficiency from other causes are precisely applicable here.

In as far as the chance of deficiency from abroad is increased by the present interruption, we have the more occasion for superfluous vents

\* See statement of imports, Note (F.), and evidence of Mr Claude Scott, p. 116-17; Mr Kent, p. 121; and Mr Mackenzie, p. 122-3-4. From this statement it appears that, during the year 1807, we have received from foreign countries, notwithstanding the embargoes, pretty nearly the average supplies, which have reached us for some years past. From Holland 233,000 qrs. and even from France 27,000 qrs. It is probable we shall receive as much next year, notwithstanding the restrictions. If we should not, we can do very well without it.

to extend our produce at home. The failure of foreign supplies may not be felt the next year, but it may be felt the year after, or some future year. If it be felt the next year, we have gained little, for we might have resorted to the present measure when we saw the proof of the failure in the rise of prices; or rather, we might have permitted the rise of prices to produce the same effect naturally. But if the pressure be delayed till some after year, the resource will be lost, from our farmers having diminished their cultivation, distrusting a market so uncertain as the distillery becomes by such frequent interference.

Indeed, in a general review of this subject of our foreign supplies, I think we shall find it too insignificant materially to influence any branch of our policy. When we consider the proportion which the average importation of late years, of 700,000 quarters of all sorts of grain, bears to our demands, we need have little apprehension of material suffering, were the whole of this supply withdrawn for the next year. It appears that, by the distilleries alone, 470,000 quarters of barley are used in Britain, which is only calculated as *one-sixteenth* of the whole barley crop\*. Of course the brewery must consume a vast deal

\* This, together with the 311,000 qrs. used in the Irish distillery, amounts to 781,000 qrs. which is 81,000 qrs. beyond the average importation of all sorts of grain.



more. A little retrenchment of these two modes of consumption, on the natural rise of prices, would supply the whole deficiency. But when we look to the vast amount of corn consumed by superfluous horses, and the over-abundant feeding of other animals, we must be satisfied, that a very slight diminution in this quarter would, in an addition to the above, much more than over-balance the whole foreign supplies withheld from us. The deficiency, I should think, would scarcely be felt in the price of bread corn. It might, however, be slightly felt for one season; and this would stimulate the farmer to a production that would probably, in one season more, fully supply our home demand, and even turn the balance of export in our favour. On the other hand, this premature and unnecessary interference will give a shock to the agricultural products, otherwise advancing, and, we may be sure, will expose us to an increased importation at some future time.

But, indeed, I think there is little probability that we shall be exposed even to the above trial. I have no doubt, from what has appeared this year, that we shall receive our usual supply from foreign states next year, and every future year, as long as we want and can pay for it.

The above is no doubt on the supposition that the crop now growing proves equal to the ave-

rage of the last few years, which may yet not be the case. There is an equal chance, however, that it will prove abundant as that it will fail. Its failure is a contingency which we have no more reason to reckon upon now than at any other time. If that misfortune should come, we must endeavour to palliate it, by retrenchment of every kind, the best way we can (for, as Dr Smith observes, a real scarcity cannot be remedied, it can only be palliated); and the rise of prices will at once indicate the evil, and enforce the remedy. The difference made by all the foreign supplies which we ever did, or ever can receive, on a serious deficiency, is very trifling. It is known how little proportion the utmost importation of 1800 and 1801 bore to our demands. It is upon our domestic agriculture that we must mainly depend; and to tamper with it by closing its natural vents, and deranging its system, when called for by no visible need, is to stop its progressive increase, and lead to that real calamity which now only exists in the imagination.

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Upon the state of produce in Ireland I have said nothing, as I have not the means of ascertaining accurately the prices there for some years back. It is, however, I believe, admitted, that no general scarcity exists there at present, such

as to justify the suspension of the distillery. And, indeed, Ireland in this, as in other interests, ought never to be considered separately from Great Britain. If a free commerce of grain between the two countries be established, a partial deficiency there will be relieved by the abundance elsewhere; and should be no more a ground for legislative interference, than a partial deficiency in any district of this island.

It appears, indeed, from the report, that the Committee is in doubt whether to recommend the prohibition of the distillery in Ireland. Their doubts, however, are unconnected with the view of scarcity, and merely proceed on difficulties regarding the revenue. If the suspension be not extended to that country, a new host of restrictive expedients must be embodied, to prevent the passage of corn spirits from thence into this country.

As to the importation of corn needed by our colonies, which, in case of a rupture with America, must be supplied from elsewhere, I have added a state of its amount for the years 1804, 1805, and 1806\*. But in the first place, I think there is little fear of their being deprived of this supply; and secondly, it is stated by Mr

\* See Note (G.)



Blackburn to be his opinion, that Jamaica at least might supply itself\*.

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THE whole argument treated in the two foregoing Sections may then be summed up in the following manner.

In a course of years of average supply, whether entirely drawn from home produce, or partly imported, the effect of distillation, like that of every other natural and indefinite vent, is to lead to a progressive increase of home produce, followed, in the one case, by the general extension of population and comfort, in the other, by the progressive diminution of import in the first place, and ultimately by the same extension of population and comfort. If the subsisting by importation, then, be considered as an evil, the distillery is still more indispensable in a country where that prevails, than in one which produces its own supplies; because the home cultivation has the more need of encouragement, to enable it to contend with the importation, and at length displace it.

But the benefit of the distillery, and other modes of superfluous consumption, though great in ordinary years, cannot be fully appreciated till the recurrence of scarcity; whether proceed-

\* App. to Rep. p. 23.

ing from deficient home produce—deficient foreign produce—the interruption of war—or from all these taken together. At such a season, the superfluous produce raised for the consumption of the distilleries; affords a fund of subsistence, which will be set free for human food by the natural rise of prices ; or, when the necessity becomes very high, may be set free by Legislative interference. This last, however, should, in general, be delayed till the whole effect had been nearly produced in the natural way. To encroach forcibly on this spare fund at any season of moderate plenty, or easy prices, is to deprive the country of it when the necessity arrives, by the discouragement of cultivation, which will probably be to a much greater amount than in proportion to the produce which the vent itself consumed. There is at present no such deficiency, or likelihood of deficiency, from any cause, as to induce us to risk such discouragement.

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I have thus endeavoured to shew, that on general and permanent principles, whether regarding this country as producing its own supplies, or importing a part of them, and whether during moderate years, or in the case of scarcity, the vent of the distillery to our home produce is a great public benefit; and it never

can be for the public benefit that this vent should be forcibly interrupted.

We are told, however, that admitting the justice of all the above general principles, the present departure from them is too trifling and temporary, to be considered as an important exception. Admitting that the interest of the public, and of the home grower, will be injured by the stoppage of the distilleries, as far as their consumption goes, this consumption, it is said, is comparatively trifling. The wants of the colonists are urgent, and require immediate relief. The distilleries will afford them such relief; while the want of their vent will be little felt by the farmer. Whatever might be the effect of a permanent suspension, the present expedient will be but temporary; and even during its continuance; a power is proposed to be lodged with the King in Council, to open the distilleries again, in case the price of barley fall too low. This view then gives up the question on general grounds, and, admitting that the public and the British growers both suffer from the suspension of distilleries, only maintains, that they should voluntarily submit to this suffering, for the relief of the distressed colonists.

This leads me to the third branch of the subject, which I proposed to consider.



## S E C T. III.

*How far the present Distresses of the Colonial Proprietors alone, afford a just Ground for the proposed Suspension of the Distillery.*

THIS inquiry naturally divides itself into two branches : *First*, Whether the colonists should receive any relief? and, *secondly*, Whether the relief proposed by the suspension of the distillery of corn be a proper one?

I. In the outset of these remarks, I intimated my opinion that the present distresses of our colonists had arisen from an over extension of the cultivation of sugar, during the temporary unproductiveness of other islands; that now, on the revival of more fertile soils, there is a quantity produced beyond the present demand of the world, and that our colonists never can be effectually relieved, till they reduce their cultivation\*. The first question, then,

\* Notwithstanding the respectable authority of the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons, 24th July 1807, to the contrary, I cannot help adhering to this opinion. The chief cause of the colonial distresses assigned there, is the import to the continent from the hostile islands, by neutral vessels. But this would never account for the difficulty, unless there were an over produce; for, during former years of peace, when the in-

that naturally occurs is, What right the colonists have to public relief of any kind, more than every other unsuccessful speculator, who is ruined by his own imprudence, or by unforeseen accidents? Whether or not it would be for the general advantage that relief were attempted in all such cases, is, I think, a question of little doubt. It would not only be impossible, but if possible would be wrong; as it would be an endeavour to anticipate the great corrective which nature has provided for human improvidence, in the sufferings which follow it. Even in the case of misfortunes produced by no imprudence, the same rule must hold; for it cannot be otherwise. How far the growers of sugar can shew any grounds for making their case an exception from the ge-

tercourse of the continent with its colonies must have been still more free and extensive, the present distresses were not complained of. It is further stated in the present Report, that the existing surplus of sugar from the *old British colonies*, of 1,312,419 cwts., is not equal to the continental demand of the last peace. But it is to be considered, that on a peace *all the other islands* would also find greater facility in sending their produce to the continent, so that, probably, very little of the above surplus would find a vent there. The fact of the rapid increase of colonial produce, is indeed distinctly admitted by Mr Hibbert, a member of the present Committee, who was examined. App. p. 166-7. The immense import of slaves, of late years, is also stated by other witnesses.

neral rule, and extending that relief to them which cannot be extended to others, it is not my present business to inquire, even if I had the proper time and means of inquiry. Cases may occur, where, from motives of compassion to the sufferers, it may be excusable to extend such relief; but I doubt exceedingly, whether, in an enlarged view, it ever can be for the public advantage to infringe the general rule. I doubt if the public ever will suffer so much from the ruin of a few imprudent individuals, as it will from the cost of relieving them, and from the encouragement which such relief gives to further imprudence.

As already said, however, I do not wish to push general principles too far. Justice may sometimes relax from her rigid equality: And I have not the means of deciding, whether the case of the colonists may not be such as to justify some deviation in their favour. If their difficulties have been in part occasioned by the public measures of the country, their claim is no doubt the stronger.

At the same time, it is not to be forgotten, that the present distresses of the colonists will never be removed by any temporary expedient. If they depend on a general cause, (the over culture of their commodity), the only effectual remedy rests with themselves. If, by such



forced enlargements of their market as this, they be encouraged to persevere in their present growth, the evil will receive but a slight palliation ; and at the end of any given period of suspension of the distillery, the colonists will require the continuance of the same violent expedient, as much as they do now, perhaps more.

We are further told in the Report, of the advantage derived from the colonies to the shipping and revenue. As to the shipping, it has probably partaken a little of the over-trade of its employers, and the allowing it again to find its own level, will do the country no serious injury. As to the revenue paid on sugars, it is equally plain, that if we force that commodity by encouragement, we tax ourselves to enable it to pay this revenue ; or, in other words, pay it ourselves in the most expensive form. As already said, however, I am not now opposing the granting of assistance to the colonists as a general measure.

II. But if such assistance is to be granted, it should surely be in a way the least unjust towards any particular class of the community, and the least injurious to the whole. The projected mode of relief, by the suspension of distilleries, is objectionable on both these grounds.

It is unjust towards the class of our home cultivators, and inexpedient in regard to the public interest.

It is unjust towards our home cultivators, in laying that burden on them, which, if borne, should be borne by the whole community. It is a positive restriction on their industry, in favour of the colonial industry. Nay, the injustice is not merely in laying the burden on the limited class of cultivators, (though the whole will suffer), but in laying its immediate weight on a small number of that class, the growers of barley. This hardship is great at any time, inasmuch as it forces into a different mode of culture, those soils which are best fitted for that produce \*; and it is peculiarly aggravated in being imposed, without previous warning, at this season of the year, when the barley crop is already sown, or the land so prepared for it, as not to be conveniently turned to any other produce.

But it is said, the whole amount of grain used in distillation is small, and the loss to the British farmer will be trifling. It is further

\* "I consider the cultivation of barley as almost necessary to the existence of Norfolk." Evid. of Mr Nathaniel Kent, App. p. 118. The impossibility of turning barley land so well to any other culture, is also stated by Mr Cox and Mr Henning, p. 149, Mr Elmar, p. 153, and Mr Wakefield, p. 109.

said, that the measure is temporary, and will be attended with no serious inconvenience.

With regard to this loss, I cannot correctly speak. The quantity of barley annually consumed in distillation in Britain is stated, in the Report, at 470,000 quarters, or about 1-16th of the whole. The loss to the farmer, even from an immediate want of sale to the above amount, is not inconsiderable. But it is to be observed, that this argument cuts two ways. If the want of this vent be a trifling loss to him, it will be but a trifling advantage to the colonists; and the smaller the burden is, the less difficult will it be for the public to relieve it in some other way. However small it is, it must bear much harder when laid on one limited class of the community, than if equally imposed on all. I can see no reason why such a tax, if necessary, should be wholly borne by our home growers. Unequal taxes, even for the support of the state, are always to be regretted; but they become somewhat more intolerable, when imposed for the relief of a small class of individuals, whose distresses are at least a presumption of their imprudence. However, this is a point which the British cultivators best know themselves. If they consider the stoppage of the distilleries as no hardship, I am satisfied. If they feel no grievance, they will not complain. If, on the



other hand, as I rather suspect, it will be a very serious evil to the cultivators in general, and to the growers of barley in particular, they should, I think, take all legal means to oppose it \*. I have endeavoured to shew, that in supporting their rights, and their interests, on the present occasion, they will promote the interests of the public.

But it is not the immediate loss that is the chief evil in the present measure. The future injury to agriculture, from the derangement of the system of cropping, and the want of a sure market, are far more important. Security in his market, is the great stimulus to the farmer's exertion; and if this be infringed, he must abandon his culture, in the prospect of that market, altogether. The mischiefs of a fluctuating policy towards any branch of industry, are perhaps more than can be easily calculated. This is the great objection to the present suspension, as a temporary measure. It is not so much the loss which the farmer will suffer for this one year; as the general loss to cultivation, from his never being sure, when, or for what reason, the measure may be repeated. In this particular view, it is even worse than if the the stoppage were permanent; for in that case

\* On this point, the testimony of all the agricultural gentlemen, examined before the Committee, is uniform.

the farmer would change his system of culture, and endeavour to push a steady market some other way\*.

Neither does the palliative of lodging a discretionary power with the King in Council, to permit the distillation of grain, at all remedy this fundamental objection. It only introduces the principle of interference and fluctuation into that market still more completely than before.

Indeed, a moment's reflection must convince us that this argument, of the measure being but temporary, is one which must apply always when the same thing is in agitation. No civilized nation, I suppose, ever enacted that the distilling of corn should *always* be illegal. Even France, who has been so justly censured for her weak policy, in regard to the corn trade, did not prohibit export *at all times*. Her error only lay in resorting to that measure too lightly and frequently, and in listening to the vain alarms of future want, upon every trifling rise of prices. It was from this fluctuating system, rather than from permanent discouragement, that her agriculture suffered. But with all her folly, I doubt if she ever resorted to the prohibition of export, when not in force, as we are now called upon to suspend the distillery, at a time

\* "It is," says Mr Wakefield, "the *bane* of a farmer to be 'driven out of his natural course.'" App. to Rep. p. 113.

of *actual abundance*, and without any certain prospect of future deficiency. I doubt if she ever did so for the mere convenience of her colonial proprietors, without want being either felt or reasonably expected at home.

Within the last *forty* years, it appears, that the distilling of corn has been suspended only twice before this time \* :—The suspensions, I am sorry to observe, are both lately. The relief obtained by the public, on those occasions, was probably trifling ; but the discouragement to agriculture, from the frequency of the measure, may be both important and permanent. On those occasions, however, there was some apology for it, from the public necessities actually felt, and the market of the distillery naturally declining of itself. At present, there is no such excuse ; and the evils of the fluctuating system are continued and augmented †.

\* From 10th July 1795 to 1st Feb. 1797, and from 8th Dec. 1800 to 1st Jan. 1802. App. to Rep. p. 205.

† The following observations of Mr Young, when speaking of the vine culture in France, are equally just and important :  
 “ There are two reasons why vines are so often found in rich  
 “ plains ; the first is, the export of wheat being either prohibited  
 “ or allowed with such irregularity, that the farmer is never sure  
 “ of a price ; but the export of wine and brandy has never been  
 “ stopped for a moment. The effect of such a contrast in policy  
 “ must have been considerable, and I saw its influence in every



On the whole, when I consider the importance of a flourishing agriculture to the prosperity, and even existence of a state—the dependence of all other branches of industry upon it for their support or extension—its influence on our social happiness, as well as our public strength—the preference which our laws have so often given to less important branches of industry—the many obstructions which naturally or artificially retard its progress—and, I may add, the general character of that class of men who are peculiarly connected with it—when I consider these things, I am disposed to regard our agricultural industry with a sort of superstitious reverence; to think it should not be lightly tampered with, to serve occasional views; and to consider any unnecessary encroachment on it as loosening one of the foundations of our strength, which cannot be even slightly displaced, without a shock to the stability of the whole.

But if such superior estimation of agriculture be a prejudice in feeling, I carry it no such length

“part of France, by the new vineyards already planted, or begun  
 “to be planted, on corn lands, while the people were starving for  
 “want of bread; of such consequence in agriculture, is a *steady*  
 “*unvarying policy*. The fact is the more striking in France,  
 “because the vine culture is very much burdened in taxation,  
 “but always possessing a free trade, it thrives.” Trav. in France,  
 Vol. I. p. 388.

in practice. I desire for agriculture no preference over other branches of industry. It needs no such assistance ; it can benefit by no such assistance. All that it requires is that equal protection which an enlightened legislature will extend to every branch of lawful industry ; and to which it cannot surely be the least entitled, when the most valuable of the whole.

But so little am I disposed to carry its pretensions too far, and so little influenced in my present argument by any disregard of our colonial industry, that were the present measure designed to give the same exclusive advantage to our home growers over the colonists, as it gives to the colonists over them, I should equally dislike it. For this reason, were the intention only to give a free admission of sugar to the distillery, I should be far from objecting to it ;—as far as I should be from objecting to a free export of our home produce to the colonies. Such mutual intercourse would not only be advisable as a present expedient, but as a permanent regulation. Let our colonists have constant free access to the market of distillation, and push it as far as they can\*. Our home growers will never suffer mate-

\* The difficulties of equalizing the duties cannot, I should think, be insurmountable. If they should, however, I think matters

rially from this in common years; and when prices rise, the natural competition of the sugar will, without violence, gradually displace the grain, and set it free for human consumption. The more deeply, and in the greater variety of lights, we view this great principle of competition, the more shall we be convinced that it adjusts all things best for the public advantage.

It is on this last ground, indeed, that I feel the chief objection to the proposed measure, and am least disposed to allow the particular reasons alleged as an excuse for it. However minute in extent, or limited in time, its operation may be, it bears too strongly the marks of a departure from the great law of equal and steady protection, and too much resembles the sacrifice of general interests to the spirit of mercantile monopoly. It had better appear (if it must appear) under any form than this. To depart from the principles of a general policy on every trifling occasion, and to substitute for it the petty resource of temporary and shifting expedients, is a system of legislation the least becoming a great and ci-

must be allowed to remain as they are; partly because all changes of this kind are attended with some evil; and partly because, when we are driven to a choice between our home agriculture and our colonies, there can be no doubt which must yield. The relief of the colonists may be managed in some other way.



vilized people. I think I have sufficiently shewn the manner in which the present *expedient* would operate unjustly towards a particular class of the community, and injuriously towards all. But even in cases where this cannot be so clearly discovered, we may rest assured, that every positive interference to promote, retard, or direct the industry of individuals, is at bottom prejudicial, and will be attended in its course with more evil than can be foreseen at the time. This great truth has been established in the inestimable work of Dr Smith, on grounds so sure, and by an induction so patient and extensive, that since his time I do not think one exception has been shewn to it, which can satisfy a sound and impartial mind. The only exception which he himself has made, (the approval of a fixed rate of interest for money,) is one of the few great errors he has committed\*. That we should ever

\* The three great branches of our policy, wherein we have chiefly attempted to regulate by positive institution the provisions of nature, are our system of corn-laws, of poor-laws, and of laws respecting usury. The consequence is, what might have been expected, in all of these systems, inconsistent doctrine, ineffectual expedients, and a constant desire to regulate by compulsive rules, which are silently undone by the operations of nature. We leave the road which is short, straight, and open before us, and exert our ingenuity to clear and level the circuitous by-path which we have perversely chosen. People wonder, that the regulations daily multiplied in these systems do not render them perfect at last, and

see this principle carried to its full extent in practice, I am not so sanguine as to imagine. As he has himself observed, the passions, the ignorance, and, what is worse, the narrow interests of men, unite to oppose it. But it is surely not too much to expect that we should keep the height we have gained, and not, in this enlightened age, fall back into the prejudices of barbarous times, and forge new fetters for ourselves, while we feel the weight of those already entailed upon us.

cry out for more amendments; but they are not aware, that the only error is, that there should be a compulsive institution on any of them, in our statute-book.

The only new laws that will ever improve any of these branches of internal policy, will be such as abrogate the old, without putting any thing in their place. But this must be cautiously and gradually done. It is the great loss of artificial systems, that their very evils ensure their continuance.

On this subject, I beg leave to refer to the masterly Treatise on Usury, by Mr Bentham. I wish that gentleman, in some of the late hints which he has given towards the improvement of our domestic policy, had preserved the same temperate and practical spirit which appears in that performance.

## NOTES.

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### NOTE (A.) p. 16.

“ THE importance of a country producing *twenty-five* bushels  
“ per acre instead of *eighteen*, is prodigious ; but it is an idle  
“ deception to speak of *twenty-five*, for the superiority of Eng-  
“ lish spring corn (barley and oats), is doubly greater than that  
“ of wheat and rye, and would justify me in proportioning the  
“ corn products of England, in general, compared with those of  
“ France, as 28 to 18 ; and I am well persuaded, that such a  
“ *ratio* would be no exaggeration. *Ten millions* of acres, pro-  
“ duce more corn than *fifteen millions*, consequently a territory  
“ of *one hundred millions* of acres more than equals another of  
“ *one hundred and fifty millions*. It is from such facts that we  
“ must seek for an explanation of the power of England, which  
“ has ventured to measure itself with that of a country so much  
“ more populous, extensive, and more favoured by nature, as  
“ France really is ; and it is a lesson to all governments what-  
“ ever, that if they would be powerful, they must encourage the  
“ only real and permanent basis of power, *agriculture*. By en-  
“ larging the quantity of the products of land in a nation, all  
“ those advantages flow which have been attributed to a great  
“ population, but which ought with much more truth to have  
“ been assigned to a great consumption, since it is not the mere  
“ number of people, but their ease and welfare, which constitute  
“ national prosperity. The difference between the corn pro-  
“ ducts of France and England is so great, that it would justify  
“ some degree of surprise, how any political writer could ever  
“ express any degree of amazement, that a territory naturally so  
“ inconsiderable as the British Isles in comparison with France,  
“ should ever become equally powerful ; yet this sentiment,  
“ founded on mere ignorance, has been very common. With  
“ such an immense superiority in the produce of corn, the more  
“ obvious surprise should have been, that the resources of Eng-



“land, compared with those of France, were not yet more decisive.” Young’s Travels in France, vol. 1. chap. 4. p. 343.

The above considerations seem to me perfectly just, and I think they admit of an important application to the present circumstances of our country. Such is now the condition of Europe, that whether we have peace or war, we must continue in a posture of jealous defence for a longer period than any human prospect can calculate. We must dedicate a large proportion of our numbers to the protection of the state, or we cannot exist in any tolerable safety. In considering the several nations of Europe, I imagine it will be found, that most of them have always maintained, and still do maintain, a much greater armed force, in proportion to their numbers and resources, than we have ever done. I believe the proportion of their population, which they have maintained in arms, has been uniformly larger than ours; and yet, if there be any truth in the principles I have stated, we should be able to maintain at least as large a proportion of our people in arms as any nation in the world; and better appointed and supplied.

Let it, therefore, be no excuse for our failing to adopt sufficient measures of defence, now when all is at hazard, that we cannot support a larger military and naval establishment. Other nations have made greater exertions to serve the purposes of conquest and ambition than we have yet made for our immediate safety. That safety, I fear, is only to be preserved by the extension and improvement of a regular force. I am not free from the old constitutional jealousy on this subject (though I think that has been extreme) but there is now only a choice of evils, and we have at present more to fear from the standing armies of other states than from our own. If we outlive the present storm, the vigour of our system will renovate itself: What we have now to provide against, is the risque of perishing in the commotion.

Some general plan of armament subsidiary to the regular force, and calculated to keep up its supplies, such as that lately recommended by Lord Selkirk, I should think also highly advisable.

#### NOTE (B.) p. 21.

“Do you think, that we could at present spare the market that our distillery affords without injuring our agriculture?—It seems to me, that it is impossible to spare it without a direct injury to the agriculture of the kingdom; for though the amount of the distillery has been stated at only *one sixteenth*,

“ still it well deserves the attention of the Committee, that the  
 “ most able writer on the subject of corn, expressly states the in-  
 “ finite consequence resulting from so small a proportion, rela-  
 “ tive to the growth, as *one thirty-second*. He states what he  
 “ conceives to be the growth of corn, and proportions it to the  
 “ greatest exportation ever known, as well as a smaller exporta-  
 “ tion. In one case he mentions, the amount being only *one*  
 “ *thirty-second* part of the growth, and in another if I recollect  
 “ right a *thirty-fourth*, and yet he draws the conclusion with  
 “ some expression of surprise, of what prodigious consequence  
 “ to the agriculture of the kingdom, that small export has been.  
 “ Now, by a fair parity of reasoning, we may take the converse  
 “ of the proposition, and suppose the deprivation of *one sixteenth*  
 “ would, on the other hand, be attended with very great and con-  
 “ siderable consequence.” Evidence of Mr Ar. Young. App.  
 to Rep. p. 104.

NOTE (C). p. 26.

With regard to the inclosure and improvement of wastes, I think the rule I have laid down in the text is the only safe and proper one; namely, that it ought to be left entirely to individual interest and exertion, and neither encouraged nor repressed by the legislature. All unnecessary obstacles to it, however, should be removed; and these, by the present law of England, are perhaps rather too great, from the expence of a direct application to Parliament for every inclosure, and the opportunity which this gives to ignorant or obstinate individuals to thwart the measure. By the law of Scotland, the division of common property among circumjacent proprietors, according to their respective interests, is a statutory right, which may be enforced by any of them before the courts of justice. If a general inclosure bill went no further than to give some such facility in England, it might probably be of advantage.

Mr A. Young, has of late years (not very consistently with his former sentiments) urged the improvement of wastes, or tillage of grass lands, by some sort of legislative encouragement. But supposing such encouragement raised so absurdly high as to force the improvement of wastes to any material extent, what would be the consequence? the remaining farmers must be discouraged, in exact proportion to the quantity of grain newly raised, and the fall of prices thereby occasioned, and they, of course, will give up cultivation to that extent. The culture will thus only be transferred from better land to worse, and the same quantity of grain will continue to be raised, but at a greater ex-

pence. Nor does Mr Young's plan of raising potatoes on the new grounds, in the least alter the question ; for as the consumption is transferred from wheat to potatoes, the demand for wheat will be lessened, the price will fall, and its culture be diminished, as effectually, and to the same extent, as if the new produce had been wheat itself. By no such plan of forced encouragement can the quantity of subsistence be increased ; because, even if the plan succeed, in forcing a new production, it will equally diminish the old, and even in a greater proportion than it adds to the new.

Mr Young, when under a very unnecessary and premature alarm on the state of our importation a few months ago, renewed his exhortations to increasing home produce, in a letter published in Cobbett's Register of March 5th, in which he speaks as if the existence of the people of Britain depended wholly on the stores from the Baltic ; and as if the want of supplies from thence, for a single season, would actually starve this country. The probability of this consequence I have considered elsewhere ; but supposing that, in conformity with his advice, a large produce could have been immediately raised from waste or grass lands, it seems clear that this, for the next season, would occasion a glut of corn in the home market, exactly in the same way as the stoppage of the distillery, which would reduce the farmers to retrench their former cultivation to the amount of the new produce, or the produce usually distilled. In the same way, the temporary supply occasioned by this forced production, would be no better than the temporary supply occasioned by stopping the distillery ; whoever, therefore, urged the one as an immediate or temporary resource, cannot consistently oppose the other. Both equally lead to a transitory supply, and an ultimate discouragement to agriculture. But though both are equally wrong in principle, they are not equally so in practice ; for one of them fortunately (the forced production) cannot be carried into effect ; the other (the forced repression) unfortunately can.

Mr Young will not, however, I imagine, have recourse to this argument, or defend his plan on the score of its being impracticable, and therefore harmless ; consequently, when the Committee press him on the subject of his proposal, I think he is reduced to a complete dilemma. Supposing the terrible failure of foreign supplies to take place next year, which both he and the Committee are agreed upon, he is asked what will be the difference between increasing the immediate supplies by a forced production, and increasing them by the forced retrenchment of distillation ? He replies, *that the culture of wastes will not much affect the growth of barley.* But what is this to the purpose in regard to a provision against scarcity, and for replacing the deficient



supplies of next season from the continent? It is the general supply of subsistence that is here in question, not the relative amount of so immaterial a produce as barley. The increase or decrease of barley, as a peculiar crop, supposing the general supply of corn to continue the same, is alike immaterial to the general farming interest, and to the public. In short, it is quite obvious, that as far as regards the temporary supply of the public, and the injury to the farmer, the two modes of proceeding, by forcing production, or suspending the distillery, supposing them equally practicable, would be precisely similar in their effects \*.

\* I here insert that part of Mr Young's evidence before the Committee, above alluded to.

"Do you consider that the present state of the country, and the doubtful reliance that is to be placed on foreign markets, call for a prompt adoption of the remedy against scarcity, which you have proposed, namely, the encouragement of potatoes, and the cultivation of waste lands?—*I certainly do, I think every hour that is lost is much to be regretted.*

"You have stated that the exclusion of grain from the distillery would injure by lowering the price of grain; do you mean that this effect would be produced by the additional quantity that would be thus thrown into the market?—Not by the additional quantity thrown into the market, but by the demand for the quantity already in the market being withdrawn,"—Which it is to be observed, in the present view, is exactly the same thing.

"Do you mean that the proportion of demand would thereby become less than the proportion of supply?—Certainly; as far as the quantity amounts to that consumed by the distillery.

"Would not the same effect upon this proportion be occasioned, if, the consumption remaining the same, an additional supply of equal amount were to be brought into the market?—*Certainly I conceive it would.*

"In what respect then will the effect on the market, which is produced by saving the consumption of a given quantity of corn, differ from that which is produced by introducing into the market an equal quantity, in addition to the former supply, by cultivating the waste lands?—*The culture of the waste lands would not have a great effect on the immediate production of barley.* The great effect would be on the potatoes, and on the food of cattle, and on the production of other grain; but probably least of all on barley. If the culture was principally to increase the production of barley, it would operate exactly in the manner alluded to, saving the consumption of the people employed in such cultivation." Which last exception, by the way, is without foundation, as the people employed on the wastes would just consume as much, were they left at their old occupations.

App. to Rep. p. 107, 8.

I may here mention a fact stated by Mr Young, in his evidence, (p. 105), which he justly considers as hardly credible, namely, that the consumption of malt, in Britain, is now less than it was ninety years ago, when the population has increased in the proportion of 9 to 5. The rate of increase in

The above argument, however, though it may be used against Mr Young personally, has no force against the cause which he espouses. It affords no ground for stopping the distilleries, with those who equally disapprove of that measure, and of the vain attempt of forcing production; and who are sensible, that so far from any deficiency, there is at present rather an abundance in the country, and no certain prospect of want for a future season. For my own part, I neither think the failure of foreign supplies likely to happen, nor, if it did happen, that it would be attended with serious inconvenience to us. But Mr Young, considering such failure both important, and likely to be immediate, and urging strong measures to supply the deficiency, must, I think, find it very difficult to shew any objection to the present measure of stopping the distillery, which will not equally apply to his own. Indeed it is clear, that as a sudden temporary resource, (if that were now wanted) the stoppage of the distillery, as being a much more effectual measure than the other, would afford an immediate supply much more surely. Its being so effectual, however, is, in another view, the grand objection to it.

But Mr Young may say, his plan is not calculated for an immediate, but for a progressive and future effect. This plea is not very consistent with the urgency of the occasion, as he has himself represented it. I am willing, however, to allow, that for a course of time it is less objectionable than a continued suspension of a vent to produce; and that, for two reasons, 1st, Because, as above mentioned, the one cannot be carried into effect, whereas the other can. The encouragement is ineffectual, and therefore only useless; the restraint is effectual, and therefore noxious. 2dly, Because, even if the culture of wastes could be forced a certain length, although the former tillage will assuredly suffer as far as the new is forced, it will suffer little further, and the average supplies will remain nearly the same. The place of growth will be only changed, the amount not diminished. Whereas, by the suspension of distilleries, a certain quantity of produce is forced from the face of the earth, and in case of a bad season, there is less resource for retrenchment. The operation of Mr Young's plan would be similar to the exclusive introduction of colonial *grain* into our distillery instead of *sugar*; with this difference, that in the one case the grain would be raised at home, in the other raised at a distance. In the question of scarcity, the plan

the population I fully subscribe to, but the decreased use of malt is indeed hardly credible. The estimate is founded on the Excise duties, which, no doubt, seem to establish the fact. But I cannot help suspecting that some error from evasions or other causes must lurk in the calculation.



of distilling from sugar is the same thing as prohibiting distillation altogether : for sugar can on no necessity be turned to human subsistence.

Mr Young on former occasions has not overlooked the folly of government interfering in the concerns of agriculture, either to encourage, direct, or restrain \*. If he had never departed from this principle, he would have avoided the inconsistencies he has now fallen into. All that agriculture needs, or ought to obtain, is equal protection ; and they who support it this length, and no further, will never be puzzled with the clashing interests of the farmer and the public, nor fall into contradiction, either in argument or in practice.

I have already ventured to remark on the uncertainty of Mr Young's general principles in regard to political œconomy, and I think the above particulars, as well as some other parts of his late conduct, afford a new proof of it. He was formerly convinced of the impropriety of all interference in agriculture, and he now urges encouragements to production. He formerly shewed, by the most striking observations on fact, the danger and misery of an over population ; and he now attacks the profound and humane philosophy of Malthus, who has suggested the only means of ever preventing that danger, and that misery †. Mr Young seems once to have reached very near the truth, and now when it is more fully shewn, he has unaccountably lost it again. He found the path by night, which he now misses in the open day. Such, however, will be the case with all who value themselves in being practical men, and reject the lessons of sound speculation.

While I thus, however, observe with freedom on what I conceive to be Mr Young's errors, I willingly bear testimony to his merits. Indeed the frequent use I have made of his authority, shews how highly I esteem it. When we consider his long and active exertions, the mass of important facts which he has collected, the difficulties with which he had to struggle in his inquiries, and the perseverance with which he overcame them, I think we must allow, that there are few individuals who have better claims on the gratitude of society. I should be sorry, indeed, that any thing which I have said should be considered as disrespectful to his character.

\* " A populous and rich country can never want bread to eat, but from the fault of its government attempting to regulate and encourage what can flourish by absolute freedom only." *Trav. in France*, Vol. I. p. 359.

† See Mr Young's observations on a legal provision for the poor. *Annals of Agriculture*, vol. 41. p. 208. and Mr Malthus's appendix to the last edition of his work.



I cannot conclude this note without alluding to Mr Edward Wakefield, whose letters, in Cobbet's Register, as well as his evidence before the Committee, contain such just and rational views on the subject of the distillery. If he favours this work with a perusal, he will see that on the uses of such a vent, as a resource against scarcity, I wholly coincide with him, though my remarks were written before I saw his letters. I think, however, that he is not less mistaken than Mr Young in his apprehensions on the subject of importation, his regrets for the decay of agriculture, and his advices to encourage our home culture, by bounties on export, or other forcible means. It is curious to observe how near extremes approach on this as on other occasions. They whose exclusive preference to agriculture leads them to exaggerate the danger of our dependence on foreign supplies, are at once met with their admission of that danger, by the supporters of the present prohibition; and hence are reduced to allow the necessity of *some compulsive precaution*, to provide against the immediate failure of importation. But if *any* compulsive precaution, for immediate need, is to be adopted, I imagine it will be difficult to shew one equally effectual with the stoppage of the distillery, that is liable to less objection.

As to Mr Cobbet himself, (*—abnormis sapiens, crassaque Minervâ*, I hope he will forgive this scrap of antiquity—) the part which he takes in the controversy, is distinguished by his usual acuteness; and he exposes very completely the inconsistencies of his two agricultural opponents. In the first part of his argument, however, he expresses himself rather indistinctly, as he appears to support the particular measure proposed by the Committee, which, he will observe, gives *an exclusive monopoly to the colonist*. In as far as his arguments proceed on the supposition of *only equal privileges* being extended to the colonist and British farmer, I am entirely at one with him; though I do not think that doctrine quite reconcilable with some others which he has lately maintained.

#### NOTE (D.) p. 41.

Mr A. Young, in his observations on the vine culture, justly concludes, that a country which yields its staple beverage from such produce, if wholly raised on land unfit for corn, has this advantage over a country like ours, whose staple beverage is manufactured from corn, that it can support, in so far, a larger population. But it is to be observed, on the other hand, that the

produce of vines can scarcely be turned to human food, so that, on occasional scarcity, the quantity of that produce usually raised affords no resource ; whereas, the corn raised for consumption in our breweries and distilleries may, in such times, be turned towards human sustenance. This is an advantage, even if all the vines were raised on soils unfit for the production of corn, as furnishing an additional vent to superfluous consumption ; but it is still more so if, as appears from Mr Young, some of the best corn soils in France are turned to the vine culture. From this, I would not infer (as some of the economists did) that in countries fit for producing vines, that produce should be discouraged, for the purpose of making the people raise corn, and drink beer. Mr Young's remarks on the impolicy of such attempts are perfectly just ; I only urge the consideration, to shew that our inability to raise vines in Britain possesses this advantage, that more corn in proportion to the population is grown and consumed, and of course a greater security is preserved against scarcity. *Travels in France*, Vol. I. c. 10.—Vol. II. c. 10.

The same sentiments he expresses in another place : “ In the arrangement of courses, that conduct which is suitable to an individual is proper for a nation. It rarely answers to a man to change his purpose in the cultivation of his farm, on account of some transitory expectation of a price. He ought to sow his ground with the plant best adapted to his general views, and to the state of his land, and not swerve from his purpose on the speculation of any particular view. And, in like manner, it will always be for the national benefit that the lands should be sown with whatever crop is most suitable to them, and whose product will pay best when valued in money. A populous and rich country can never want bread to eat, but from the fault of its government attempting to regulate and encourage what can flourish by absolute freedom only. The inhabitants of such a country will always command wheat, because they can afford to pay for it ; and her own farmers will never fail of raising that, or any other produce, in any quantity demanded, provided they are not impeded by injudicious laws and restrictions. In these principles, it is necessary to consider all products as equally beneficial, provided they may be equally converted into money.” *Travels in France*, Vol. I. p. 359.

NOTE (E.) p. 43.

*State of the Prices of Wheat, Barley, and Oats, per Quarter, at the Corn Exchange, London, for the Months of October and May, from 1804 to 1807.—Taken from The Scots Magazine.*

		WHEAT.		BARLEY.		OATS.	
		sh.	sh.	sh.	sh.	sh.	sh.
1804.	October,	70	to 87	31	to 45	23	to 30
1805.	{ May,....	80	to 100	35	to 41	23	to 30
	{ October,	60	to 80	32	to 42	24	to 34
1806.	{ May,....	70	to 84	25	to 36	23	to 30
	{ October,	70	to 93	34	to 50	22	to 28
1807.	{ May,....	64	to 80	28	to 36	20	to 28
	{ October,	54	to 68	34	to 42	24	to 34

*State of the above Prices Monthly, from November 1807 to the 16th May 1808.*

		WHEAT.		BARLEY.		OATS.	
		sh.	sh.	sh.	sh.	sh.	sh.
1807.	November,	60	to 72	36	to 47	24	to 30
	December,	60	to 74	36	to 47	26	to 38
1808.	January,	60	to 74	34	to 43	30	to 37
	February,	60	to 72	38	to 46	30	to 38
	March,...	60	to 74	36	to 44	27	to 40
	April,...	64	to 74	36	to 45	30	to 40
	16th May,....	50	to 78				

NOTE (F.) p. 50.

*State of the amount of Import in Wheat, Flour, Barley, and Oats, from Foreign Countries into Great Britain, for Five Years, ending 5th January 1808.—Taken from Appendix to Report of the Committee, p. 198-9.*

	WHEAT.	FLOUR.	BARLEY.	OATS.
	Qrs.	Cwts.	Qrs.	Qrs.
1803.	182,641	302,992	1,093	254,573
1804.	365,009	16,858	9,071	500,151
1805.	818,147	54,503	27,634	274,156
1806.	126,911	244,730	2,058	183,198
1807.	182,558	497,231	2,963	425,904



From the above statement it will be seen, that the average importation of the above five years, and on all the different sorts of grain, differs very little. The average, calculated in the Report of the Committee, for each year is 700,000 quarters. From this it would appear that there is no such progressive increase of imports into this country as some people imagine. The whole amount is very trifling in comparison with our home produce, and, I should suppose, does not nearly equal the superfluous consumption of average years. Were we, therefore, to be wholly deprived of foreign supplies for next, or any future season, we should probably feel it very little. But it appears, that during the whole of 1807, we have received our usual quantity, chiefly from Holland, Germany, and America, and partly even from France.

The different nations who have supplied us, and the proportions of their supply, during 1807, are exhibited in the following Table, taken from the Report as above.

	Wheat, qrs.	Flour, cwts.	Barley, qrs.	Oats, qrs.
Denmark,.....	10,424	—	407	61,070
Russia,.....	5,709	6	201	2
Poland,.....	7,039	—	—	—
Prussia,.....	4,425	—	—	10,750
Germany,.....	3,376	109	2,151	130,355
Holland,.....	11,415	—	108	222,245
France,.....	27,068	2,059	78	96
United States,.....	108,595	493,909	—	—
Other foreign Countries	4,503	1,146	6	1,384
Total,....	182,558	497,231	2,963	425,904

The summation is not perfectly accurate, as I have neglected the odd bushels.

The above, however, are the gross imports, from which must be deducted the exports from this country during the relative years, to give the actual balance of import.

Note (G.) p. 67.]

*State of the amount of Importation of Grain, Flour, and Meal, into our West India Colonies, from all parts, specifying the amount Imported from Britain.—Taken from Appendix to Report, p. 188.*

		Grain, qrs.	Flour & Meal,
1804.	From other Countries,.....	55,197	579,099
	From Great Britain and Ireland....	20,692	23,535
	Total,	75,889	602,634
1805.	From other Countries,.....	51,261	437,729
	From Great Britain and Ireland,...	18,220	37,005
	Total,	69,481	474,784
1806.	From other Countries,.....	48,756	405,057
	From Great Britain and Ireland,...	29,775	42,905
	Total,	78,531	447,962

## APPENDIX.

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*Report from the Committee on the Distillation of Sugar and Molasses,  
Ordered to be printed 13th April, 1808.*

### DISTILLATION OF SUGAR AND MOLASSES.

THE Committee appointed to inquire, and report, how far, and under what Circumstances, it may be practicable and expedient to confine the Distilleries of the United Kingdom to the use of Sugar and Molasses only; and also what other Provision can be made for the Relief of the Growers of Sugar in the British West India Colonies; and to report the same, with their Observations and Opinion thereupon, from time to time, to the House:—and who were empowered to report the Minutes of the Evidence taken before them;

**H**AVE, pursuant to the orders of the House, examined the matters to them referred; and have agreed to the following

#### R E P O R T.

Your Committee felt it their first duty to examine into the continuance of that severe pressure upon the holders of West India property, and those connected with it, which was so clearly proved before your Committee of the last session of Parliament.

For this purpose your Committee called before them several gentlemen connected with those islands, and experienced in the colonial trade; these gentlemen fully confirmed the evidence given last year, and proved to the conviction of your Committee, that the continuance of the pressure has materially added to its weight.

It appears from accounts laid before your Committee, that the price of sugar has greatly diminished since the year 1799; the average price of 1800, was 65s. per cwt.; the average of 1807, was 34s. per cwt. both exclusive of duty. In consequence of that depreciation, and of the increased expence attendant on the cultivation of the article, the situation of the sugar planter has been rapidly declining, till at length the value of the produce is, on an average, barely equal to the charges of production, leaving no rent for the land, and no interest for the large capital employed upon it.

It appears that the obstacles opposed to the exportation of colonial produce, added to its forced accumulation in the market from the conquered colonies, have been the principal causes of its depreciation. While the planter has remained subject to a monopoly in favour of British produce and navy-



gation, his exclusive possession of the home market has been interfered with; and, while the British consumption has been increasing, the efforts he has made to meet it have turned entirely to his own disadvantage.

It appears that the planter cannot so withdraw his capital, diminish the extent, or change the object of his cultivation, as to procure for himself any adequate relief; and, without Legislative intervention, there is no prospect of his being extricated from his distress. Annuitants dependant on West India property for their provision, have, in many instances, been totally deprived of that income.

The increased price of all the usual articles of supply, added to the depreciation of colonial produce, has deprived a great proportion of the owners of the resources wherewith to furnish the accustomed stores of food and clothing for their negroes, and of duly providing for their superintendence; and, if relief be not speedily applied, these stores must be actually diminished or withheld, whereby much painful privation will be suffered by the negroes, and discontent, if not commotion among them, may be seriously apprehended.

In the Report of the Committee of the Assembly of Jamaica, it is stated, that there are one hundred and fifteen sugar estates respecting which suits are depending in the Court of Chancery; from which, and from other evidence, it appears that foreclosures of securities on property are become unusually frequent in that island, which will deprive many owners of their estates for sums quite disproportioned to their value. Another effect from this cause will be, much individual distress to the negroes, who, in consequence of such foreclosures, will in many instances be separated from their families.

From all these considerations, your Committee submit, that the case of distress thus made out, is as urgent as it is severe; that therefore it is not only necessary to adopt measures of permanent relief, but also such as may have an early operation, and apply to the coming crop, in order to prevent the accumulation of distress that will otherwise arise, before any such ulterior regulations can take effect.

From the ACCOUNTS annexed to this Report, it appears,

THAT the average importation of Sugar into Great Britain, for				Cwts.
5 years, ending with 1785, was				1,579,537
				Cwts.
Deduct, exported	}	Annual Average	{	314,730
to Ireland				
Do. do to other	}		{	314,730
Parts				
Average annual Balance remaining for the Consumption of Britain				1,264,807
Add, quantity exported, as above, to Ireland				157,217
Annual Balance remaining for the annual consumption of the Empire				1,422,024

The above is exclusive of the small direct import into Ireland from the West Indies.

THAT the average importation of Sugar into Great Britain for				Cwts.	
1802 and 1803 (being 2 years of peace) was				-	3,741,486
				Cwts.	
Deduct, average export to Ireland	} Annual average {	167,267	} 1,870,025	1,870,025	
Do. do. to other parts		1,702,758			
Annual average balance remaining for consumption of Britain				-	1,871,461
Add, average annual importation into Ireland (direct) for the same period	} 171,224				
Deduct, export from Ireland	} 1,666				
				169,558	} - - 336,825
Add, quantity exported to Ireland, as above	167,267				
Average annual balance remaining for the consumption of the Empire				-	2,208,286

THAT the average importation of Sugar into Great Britain, for 4 years, from 1804 to 1807, both inclusive, (being 4 years of war) was				3,473,488
Deduct, average annual export to Ireland		174,166	} 1,145,924	1,145,924
Do.	do.	to other Parts		
Annual average balance remaining for consumption of Britain				2,327,564
Add, average annual importation into Ireland direct from the West Indies, for 3 years, from 1804 to 1806, both inclusive (the return for 1807 not having been yet received)		135,390	} 134,928	
Deduct export from Ireland		462		
Add, quantity exported to Ireland, as above		-	-	174,166
				309,094
Average annual balance remaining for the consumption of the Empire				2,636,658

THAT the quantity of Sugar imported into Great Britain, during the year ending 5th January 1808, was, viz.							
From the old British West India Islands	}	3,069,805	}	-	-	3,651,686	
From the conquered Colonies, viz.							
Trinidad, Demerara, St Lucia,	}	581,881					
Surinam, and Tobago							
- Deduct, export to Ireland	-	-					-
- " " to other Parts	-	-	-	-	1,130,534		

Balance remaining for the consumption of Britain	Cwts. 2,288,044
Add, quantity exported to Ireland, as above	233,108
Balance remaining for the consumption of the Empire, exclusive of the direct import into Ireland	2,521,152

## ABSTRACT OF THE ABOVE STATEMENT.

	Annual average Importation into		Total Im- portation.	Average annual Exporta- tion to Foreign Parts.	Balance remain- ing for the Consumption of Great Britain and Ireland.
	Great Britain.	Ireland.			
Annual average for 5 years ending with 1785	1,579,537	- -	1,579,537	157,513	1,422,024 cwts.
Annual average for 2 years, viz. 1802 & 1803	3,741,486	171,224	3,912,710	1,704,424	2,208,286 do.
Annual average for 4 years, viz. 1804, 1805, 1806, & 1807	3,473,488	135,390	3,608,878	972,220	2,636,658 do.
Imported from the old Bri- tish Islands 3,069,805	3,651,686	- -	3,651,686	1,130,534	2,521,152 do.
Do. from conquered Colo- nies - - 561,881					

THE preceding Statement shews, that the quantity of Sugar annually consumed in Great Britain and Ireland, upon an average of 4 years, ending with 1807 inclusive, was - - - 2,636,658

And that the average export from the United Empire, during the same period to foreign parts, was - - - 972,220

That the importation, for the year ending 5th January 1808, not including the quantity imported into Ireland direct, was - - - 3,651,686

Of which the quantity exported to foreign parts, was - - - 1,130,534

Leaving, for home consumption - - - 2,521,152

Should there be no export to the Continent in the course of 1808, a quantity equal to what was exported during 1807, as above stated, will be thrown upon the market for home consumption; to which must be added, the quantity of sugar which may be expected from the Danish Islands; and the consequence of such a glut must necessarily be, a very considerable deduction in the price of sugar, unless an additional vent shall be found at home to take off the surplus.



THE following calculation shews the increased consumption of sugar in the British empire within the last 22 years; also, a comparative statement of the actual production of the British colonies with British consumption, and of the surplus production of the British colonies; with the demand for sugar at the British market for the use of the continent, during the short interval of peace:

Annual consumption of sugar in Great Britain and Ireland, upon an average of 5 years, ending with 1785	- - - -	1,422,024
Do - upon an average of 4 years, ending with 1807	- - - -	2,636,658
Increased consumption	- - - -	1,214,634
Average annual Import of 1804, 1805, 1806, & 1807, into the United Empire, was	- - - -	3,608,378
Deduct, import from conquered colonies (supposing 1807 to be an average)	- - - -	581,881
Average annual import from old British colonies	- - - -	3,026,997
Average annual consumption in Great Britain and Ireland, for the above period	- - - -	2,636,658
Annual surplus above consumption, from our own colonies	- - - -	390,339
Average annual export during peace, 1802 & 1803	- - - -	1,702,753
Average annual superfluity of old British colonies, as above	- - - -	390,339
Shewing the insufficiency of the present surplus produce of the old British colonies to meet a continental demand, equal to that of the last peace, to be	- - - -	1,312,419

With a view to apply as speedy a relief as possible to the case thus made out, your Committee proceeded to consider of the expediency of prohibiting the distilleries of the united kingdom, or any part thereof, from the use of grain, and confining them to that of sugar and molasses. This inquiry, involving in it the interests of the revenue, the distillers, and the landholders of the country, your Committee have gone through a long and minute investigation, with a view to ascertain how far these interests might severally be affected by the proposed restriction.

It appears from the evidence of Mr Jackson, that the revenue received from the English distilleries amount to near L. 2,000,000; and is collected at the expence of one halfpenny in the pound. This revenue arises from a duty of 1s. 4½d. per gallon of wash; 100 gallons of wash are produced from about one quarter of corn; and the allowed produce of spirit from that quantity of wash is 19 gallons, at one to 10 over hydrometer proof. The customs duty on the cwt. of sugar is 27s.; two cwt. of sugar will produce 100 gallons of wash, which will produce 22 gallons of spirit at 1 to 10 over hydrometer proof.

The present duty on sugar wash is 2s. 0¼d. per gallon. If sugar were to be used without any alteration of the rate of duty, the Revenue would gain; but the cost of the raw material would be greatly increased, and a

proportionable rise in the price of spirits to the consumer would be the consequence. It would be desirable therefore that some modification of the duty should take place.

It appears from a calculation of Mr Jackson, that taking the price of barley at 43s. a quarter, and of malt at 80s. a quarter, 116 gallons of corn-wash (producing the same quantity of spirit as 2 cwt. of sugar) would, in materials and duty, cost the distiller 10s. 4½d. per gallon, of which 7s. 10½d. would be the duty to Government. Taking the price of sugar at 60s. per cwt. and reducing the duty on the wash to 1s. 2½d. per gallon, the cost to the distiller would be 10s. 10d. per gallon, of which the duty would be 7s. 10d., bringing the duty, under the proposed restriction, to within a fraction of what it now is.

The malt duty being much more easily evaded than the customs duty on sugar, which in fact is little, if at all eluded, it appears that that duty ought to remain as it is, and that the reduction ought to take place in the duty on the wash. There is, on account of the quicker dissolution of the material, a greater facility of fraud in the case of sugar than of corn wash; but on the whole, the chances of fraud would be diminished, the profit of it lessened, and the loss to the Revenue, even if it were practised, would not be so great.

Under these limitations, your Committee are induced by the evidence before them, to hope that the Excise regulations may be so arranged, without great or inconvenient alteration, as to prevent any material injury to the revenue from the proposed suspension.

In Scotland, the system of collecting the duty is different and more complicated. In the Lowlands, there is an annual licence duty of L.162 per gallon on the contents of the still; for which the distiller is permitted to make 2,025 gallons of spirit within the year, the licence expiring whenever that quantity appears to have been made. This duty amounts, on the gallon of spirit, to 1s. 7d. 2-10ths. There is a wash-duty of 5d. which, computed at the rate of 16½ gallons per cent. on the 100 gallons of wash, amounts to 2s. 6d. 3-10ths; and there is a spirit duty of 1s.; the total being 5s. 1½d. per gallon.

The lower per-centage on the wash is occasioned by the rapid mode of distillation which is imposed upon them by law, and which subjects them to a constant waste of material, which they consider as a species of indirect duty. Sugar, it appears, would be better adapted to their quick mode of distillation than corn, as in the wash from the former there is no such residuum as there is in the wash produced from the latter. There is, therefore, no reason to suppose that the same per-centage of 22 gallons of spirits from 100 gallons of sugar wash might not be expected in Scotland as well as in England. As it would be advisable, for the reasons stated by Mr Jackson, to retain the whole of the Customs duty on the sugar, it would only be necessary to make a certain reduction in the duty on the wash, or on the spirit.

The present distinctions in favour of the Highland distiller (by which he is required to produce only 10 per cent. on the wash, and is charged with a duty amounting on the whole to 4s. 5d. per gallon of spirit, instead of 5s. 1½d.) arose from an alleged inferiority of the material from which he works. Under the proposed restriction (the material being the same as that used by other distillers) the same per-centage of 22 gallons would of course be required. If it should be thought fit to charge the same amount of duty, it would only be necessary to apply the principle before recommended. The



process of working is slower than in the Lowlands, and, on account of the difficulty of obtaining fuel, it might be proper to leave that as it is now established.

The trades for export from England to Scotland, and *vice versa*, and for home consumption, are separately carried on, and under separate regulations. If, therefore, it should be deemed expedient to confine the prohibition to England, there could be no difficulty in subjecting the Scotch export-trader to that prohibition, as he is to other regulations imposed on the English distillers. But the partial adoption of this measure in any part of this Island would afford so strong a temptation in the other to smuggle the corn spirit which they would be entitled to manufacture, into the part subject to the prohibition, that much detriment would accrue to the revenue therefrom: and, indeed, there seems to be no good reason connected with the revenue why this measure should not be extended to Scotland. Much illicit trade is undoubtedly carried on in the Highland district, and the proposed restriction would encourage it, to a certain degree, on account of the preference entertained for corn spirit; but the frauds practised in evading the malt duty, by the licensed distillers, would be effectually stopped.

The collection of the Irish revenue is ultimately regulated by the quantity of the spirits, and is necessarily attended with more checks than in England. A duty of 4s. is charged on the gallon of spirit. The mode of working the distilleries is, by a certain number of doublings or charges of the still, required within twenty-eight days. There are three stages in which the duty is checked, on the pot-ale or wash, at the rate of 10 gallons of spirits to 100 gallons of wash; on the singlings, or low wines, at two-fifths of spirits; and on the spirits according to the quantity; no reference whatever being had to the strength.

Should it be thought fit to extend the prohibition to Ireland, a modification of the rate of duty would be required, on the principle before stated. If the number of doublings is to continue to regulate the duty, the amount of the charge ought to be calculated on the utmost possible number of workings, which has been the principle on which the laws for collecting the revenue have been made. The number of workings has been gradually and progressively increased, and it is apprehended may admit of still further increase.

The substitution of sugar for grain in Irish distillation would undoubtedly so far prove beneficial to the revenue of that country, as it would prevent all fraud on the material to be used. The frauds on the malt duty, which are stated to be enormous, so far as concerns the distilleries would be prevented.

It is stated however, that it would be impossible to restrict the Irish licensed distillers to the use of sugar, their numbers being to those of the English distillers in the proportion of five to one:—That it would be very difficult to prevent them from using corn wash, which (under pretence of obtaining yeast) they would procure of the strength requisite for their purposes from the breweries, which are not subject to the Excise, excepting in as far as relates to the malt duty. This practice they are stated to have followed when the distillation from corn was last prohibited.

It is however, admitted, that if proper regulations could be devised, and the vigilance of the revenue officers could be relied on, the frauds might in a great measure be prevented. But there would, it appears, be considerable difficulty in framing such regulations, or in inducing the officers sud-



derly to change that relaxed conduct, and in many cases corrupt behaviour, to which they have been unfortunately too much addicted. This difficulty with regard to the officers, would add to the facilities to fraud arising from the more rapid dissolution of sugar, which even of itself would render it far from easy to get an accurate account of the wash.

The enormous account of the illegal distillation in Ireland (which is chiefly practised in the North) is urged as a strong objection to the proposed measure. The very great preference entertained by the people for corn spirits; the consequent hopes of sending them to other parts of the country, where there are fewer illicit stills; and the desire which would be created in landholders to find a market for the corn, thus excluded from the legal distilleries, would, it seems, operate to the great detriment of the revenue, by tempting an increase of private distillation, which would be entirely from corn; and if so, whatever that increase should be, the revenue would receive additional injury to that amount, without causing any additional consumption of Sugar. This objection would, however, not apply in case of a serious apprehension of scarcity, because the inhabitants would then be active in stopping the use of corn in the illicit distilleries.

The detail of regulation which would be necessary to protect the intercourse of spirits from Ireland would be considerable, and your Committee pass by that subject, leaving it for the consideration of parliament.

In case it should be thought inconvenient to extend the restriction generally to Ireland, it were to be wished that the distillation for export from thence, might be confined to sugar. Under such a regulation, however, considerable inconvenience might arise from the probability that a great deal of corn spirit would be exported under the pretence of exporting sugar spirit. This too would be an inconvenience superadded to the risk arising from the illicit trade, as above stated.

On the whole, if it should be deemed expedient to confine this measure to Great Britain, your Committee would recommend a suspension of all intercourse in spirits between the two islands, as the best security that could be afforded to the British revenue and manufacture, such suspension to continue while the corn distillers should be restricted in Great Britain. With a view to afford security to the revenue, as well as to protect the interest of the present corn distillers, it would be an indispensable measure, to whatever part of the Empire the suspension of the use of grain in the distilleries should be applied, to confine the power of distilling from sugar, to the houses now engaged in the malt distilleries.

The Maidstone distillery was established under a particular act of Parliament, and works, for a particular object, with different materials from the ordinary distillers. That house cannot make a spirit from sugar similar to that now made from corn. Were this distillery allowed to go on working from their present materials, the rest of the trade being subject to the suspension, the injury that would accrue both to the revenue and the other Distillers need scarcely be pointed out. This peculiar mode of distillation ought, therefore, to be suspended during the operation of the proposed measure. But your Committee recommend that for that period, the proprietors ought to be allowed to enter and work from sugar as ordinary distillers. They were not allowed so to work during the last prohibition, and suffered accordingly. It is stated that they now pay £. 30,000 per annum

to Government, which would be lost, whilst an encouragement would be given to the smuggling of Hollands geneva, of which their spirit is the rival. Against this loss, however, must be set the probable legal importation of Hollands gin, which pays a much higher duty, and the additional quantity of sugar spirit that would be manufactured and consumed.

Your Committee are not prepared to give any decided opinion as to the propriety of permitting the use of molasses in distillation. That article being the produce of refined sugar, and a drawback being allowed on the exportation of that sugar equal to the whole duty, no abatement of duty could be afforded on the molasses wash, such as has been recommended in the case of sugar wash. It besides appears, that the material of sugar is equally advantageous to the manufacturer, and produces a spirit equally pure, and as good for all purposes. Brandy, which is now made from molasses, might, with equal profit, be made from sugar.

It appears from the account of Mr Jackson, that, calculating from the quantity of spirits that pay duty, the distilled produce of 304,206 quarters of grain is consumed in England, a considerable portion of which spirit is manufactured in, and imported from Scotland and Ireland. By the same evidence, the quantity of grain distilled in Scotland, for their home consumption, amounts to 147,588 quarters. By the Excise return from that country (which is exclusive of the export to England, and inclusive of the import of English barley for the distilleries, which is considerable every year) it is stated at 169,367 quarters. Mr Jackson's calculation for Ireland is formed on an average of two years, ending in 1806, and is far below the quantity since consumed.

Another evidence states the quantity of corn used in Irish distillation at 333,333 quarters;—the quantity used in Scotland at 155,555 quarters; and in England, including the importation from Scotland and Ireland, at 291,166 quarters; making 780,054 quarters for the use of the distilleries of the united empire. It is difficult to get any very precise information on this head. But taking 780,000 as the whole quantity; taking Mr Jackson's account for England at about 300,000; the Scotch Excise account 169,000; the total for Great Britain, 469,000, would leave the remainder, or 311,000 quarters for the consumption of Ireland. It appears, however, by an official return from Ireland, that the quantity of grain used for distillation there is computed at 672,075 barrels, at 224 pounds per barrel; three-fourths of that grain are oats.

In order to form their opinion on the manner in which the proposed restriction would affect the cultivation of barley in this kingdom, your Committee entered into a long and minute examination of various persons connected with the agriculture of the country; some possessing local and practical knowledge, others well known as being capable of affording the most extensive general information.

The opinion of these persons is, that barley is essential to the cultivation of the barley districts of England; that on such soils no other crop could be advantageously substituted in its room; that the distilleries are looked to as a source of considerable influence on the price of the article; and that the proposed restriction would be injurious to the growers of barley, by diminishing the market of it. The effect of this would be, in their opinion, a reduction in the price; on the supposition of an average crop, and that the same quantity continued to be sown; or, if to avoid the effects of depreciation in the market, a less quantity were to be cultivated,



the farmers would be injured, by being driven out of their usual course of cropping, and by the forced application of the land to other produce less suited to the nature of the soil.

Mr Arthur Young, Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, has stated the quantity of barley grown in England at about 4,800,000 quarters, and calculates the quantities used in the distilleries at 300,000, or 1-16th of that amount. He believes, that to withdraw from the market even that small proportion, would have a great effect in lowering the price of the article. He conceives, however, that the depreciation, or the alarm of it, cannot have any effect on the quantity sown this year, but on that sown in the next year; which effect "would depend entirely on the idea of the public relative to having a different motive this time twelve months, for repeating the stoppages, from any which operates at present." He thinks that in the event of an abundant harvest, the restriction would prove peculiarly hard upon the farmer, and arrest him in every exertion of his industry.

Another witness states, that the farmers conceive the distilleries to be a source of greater influence on the market than they really are. He thinks the proposed suspension would operate as a greater discouragement than it ought, and that the farmer (acting under exaggerated reports) would not sow his usual quantity of barley.

It is to be observed, however, that the effect of clamour or alarm is, from its nature, but temporary, and would assuredly die away if any equivalent were found for the privation that caused it; such an equivalent would be found in the increased demand which would arise from any failure in our usual importation of grain. Moreover, as the quantity sown this year will not be affected by the proposed restriction, and as there is no ground to suppose that a similar measure will take place next year, the very re-opening of the distilleries to the produce of his industry, cannot but do away any evil occasioned by the effect of a temporary alarm on the mind of the farmer.

It appears that, in the districts peculiarly adapted to barley, that grain pays better than oats, and prepares the ground better for the wheat that usually concludes the course. It is also generally preferred to oats for the purpose of sowing with grass, and is considered as infinitely less exhausting to the soil. It is stated in a part of the evidence, that in the barley districts the number of sheep maintained under the turnip husbandry is greater when barley forms a part of this course, than it could be if oats, or any other grain were substituted for it, as the turnips can be kept on the ground longer if followed by a crop of barley, than if followed by any other spring crop. Spring wheat is not deemed admissible into the course of cropping, and the experiments tried with it are stated to have totally failed. It is admitted by some, that supposing the price of oats to be so raised as to be put in competition with that of barley, such a rise, coupled with the greater quantity of the former produced on an acre of land, might induce some farmers to have recourse to that crop; though it seems generally to be considered, that such a course would be inexpedient to be taken on land superiorly calculated for the growth of barley.

There is a peculiar circumstance attendant on Norfolk, which, in the estimation of persons connected with that county, would make the proposed restriction bear harder on them than on the farmers in any other barley district, namely, the annual export of barley to Scotland, which is consi-



derable, and which would thus be cut off. It also appears, that the culture of barley is essential to the turnip husbandry, as there practised with so much success. It is however generally admitted, that there are many parts of England to which these objections do not apply; and where the cultivation of oats, supposing the price to rise, might be substituted for that of barley without any loss to the farmer.

With regard to the southern part of Scotland, and the districts in the north into which the improved husbandry has been introduced, it appears that spring wheat has been much and very advantageously cultivated there of late years; and that the quantity of barley grown has proportionably diminished. It appears, moreover, that oats are not there deemed so exhausting a crop as they are in the south. It is thought, however, that any impediment to the growth of barley might be detrimental to the landholder, by lowering the price of grain.

In the Highlands, and those parts of the North Lowlands into which the improved system has not been introduced, or which, from the nature of their soil or climate, are under peculiar disadvantages, the case is different; very little two-rowed barley is grown there, but the four-rowed barley called bere. In some parts of those districts, no wheat is grown, and the proportion of oats does not amount nearly to that of bere. It is stated, that any measure of discouragement to the culture of bere would be detrimental, as it would be difficult to find a substitute for it; a considerable portion of it is said to be consumed in distillation, though what the proportionate amount of that is to the quantity grown could not be learned. It ought here to be again remarked, that illicit distillation prevails considerably in the Highlands, and North of Scotland, and that doubtless a great part of the bere is consumed in that way.

It appears to your Committee, that considerable quantities of wheat, flour, and oats, have been annually imported into Great Britain for some years past, while the export of those articles has been very trifling. The annual import and export of barley is very small. This furnishes a sufficient proof that we have of late years depended, in some degree, upon our foreign connections for a supply of food for the inhabitants of this country; and your Committee are not informed of any circumstances attendant on the late crop that can diminish the importance of that resource.

Your Committee, taking into their most serious consideration the state of our foreign relations, and the consequent probability that our usual supply of grain from foreign countries may fail us, are naturally led to suggest measures of precaution, which may eventually ward off so great an evil.

It appears, that about 470,000 quarters of grain are annually consumed by the British distillers, and 672,075 barrels, or about 420,000 quarters in Ireland; and that the annual importation of corn into Great Britain from foreign parts, exclusive of that from Ireland, has for five years past amounted to about 770,000 quarters. Under the pressure of an actual scarcity, there would be no hesitation in having recourse to a stoppage of the distilleries. Your Committee therefore submit, that the restriction of that trade to the use of sugar for a limited time in Great Britain only, (if the measure should be deemed inadmissible as to Ireland,) would be a wise precaution under our present prospects. It would leave for the food of the people 470,000 quarters of grain, a quantity greater than the importation of oats in the last year.

Aware, however, that should any change of circumstances open our communication with the rest of the world, this measure might be rendered unnecessary in the view just stated—aware that, although in the event of a deficient crop this year, the distress would be greatly increased, if accompanied by a deficiency in our usual foreign supplies; yet, that in the event of a superabundant harvest, the proposed restriction might be found very hurtful to the agricultural interests of the kingdom—aware that the return of peace might relieve the West India Planters from their present distress, and that probably some measures may be devised, which may alleviate that distress, before the period to which it is proposed to limit this suspension shall be concluded, your Committee recommend in the strongest manner, that any bill to be brought in, in consequence of this Report, should contain a clause, granting a power to the King in Council, upon a sufficient notice, to do away the suspension, and allow the distillers to carry on their trade in the accustomed manner.

When it is considered how very small a portion of the barley grown in this kingdom is consumed by the distillers, it is scarcely possible to think that the proposed measure itself can bear very hard upon the grower. It is calculated that 1,200,000 acres are used for that purpose, of which about 80,000, or one-sixteenth, are sufficient to grow the whole quantity from which the spirits consumed in England are produced. The quantity of barley and bere grown in Scotland does not, in all probability, bear a much less proportion to that consumed in a similar manner. There are doubtless many parts of the country in which the substitution of a different crop could be attended with no disadvantage, and might eventually be attended with profit. In the most cultivated parts of Scotland, in which a practical knowledge of agriculture exists in as great perfection as anywhere, such a substitution has been found actually to answer. It is to be remarked, that although it may be deemed disadvantageous to substitute any other grain in the room of barley, yet that the prices of grain mutually operate upon each other, and that a rise or fall in the price of any one kind must have a corresponding influence on the prices of the rest; and that any alarm which might be created by this measure can only operate prospectively as to next year's crop, from an expectation that the same suspension will again be resorted to.

Your Committee trust, that on a full consideration of the subject, all apprehension will be done away by the power proposed to be vested in the King in Council. They are sensible that they shall not have fulfilled the duties imposed on them by the House, unless they proceed to consider every possible mode of relief for the proprietors of West India estates; and they trust that they shall be enabled to suggest measures so permanently beneficial to that body, as to render it unnecessary for them again to apply for the interference of Parliament, even should the present anomalous state of our foreign relations be protracted.

Your Committee are persuaded, that the permanent adoption of this measure would be attended with great evils to the agriculture of the country; they feel it incumbent on them to state, that nothing in the evidence before them could induce a recommendation to that effect; they conceive that its frequent repetition would be still more hurtful; and nothing but the strong case so clearly made out by the West India interest, coupled with the loss of our trade with the countries from whence we derived a great proportion of our foreign supply, could prevail upon them to advise

even this slight temporary interference (guarded as it is by the proposed limitations) with an established system of agriculture.

The peculiar situation of Ireland, the great difficulty of collecting the revenue on spirits there, the great prevalence of illegal distillation, and the fear that this measure, together with the popular preference for corn whisky, might increase that trade to an unlimited amount, and interfere with any regulations that might be adopted for its suppression, prevent your Committee from decidedly recommending the extension of this suspension to that country; but they are by no means prepared to assert, that such regulations may not possibly be devised as to render its adoption there as practicable as in Great Britain. They are unwilling to express an opinion on this part of the question.

Your Committee press upon the consideration of the House the severe loss that must be felt by the empire at large, and no part of it more than by the landed interest, if some efficient remedy should not save the West India Colonies from the disasters that await them. When it is recollected, that this country derives from them a net revenue on sugar of L. 3,000,000 annually, besides the duties on the other articles of their produce; that they take off manufactures and produce of this country to the amount of L. 6,000,000 Sterling; to which considerations must be added the shipping they employ, and the sailors bred in the trade; and that were the restriction taken off that now impedes the export of corn to the Colonies, they would import from hence, to the great advantage of the British landholder and merchant, a considerable proportion of what they now do from foreign parts; it is hoped that the House will think your Committee warranted, under the peculiar circumstances of the times, in recommending the suspension of the use of grain in the distilleries of Great Britain, and their restriction to the use of sugar for one year, from the first of July 1808, to the first of July 1809, accompanied by the aforesaid discretionary power to be vested in his Majesty.



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## No. 3.

STATEMENT of the Bounties as granted on Wheat, Barley, and Oats, by the 31st of George III., Cap. 30.\*

Prices under which the Bounties were given.	Amount of Bounties.	
	s.	d.
On Wheat when under per Quarter . . . 44	5	0
On Barley when under per Quarter . . . 22	2	6
On Oats when under per Quarter . . . . 14	2	0

\* The regulations, with regard to the Bounties on Exportation, were the same in this Act as those in the Act of 1773, and are only here re-inserted, as the depreciation of money had advanced, and must of course have diminished the real value of these Bounties.

## No. 4.

TABLE expressing the value of the Prices under which a Bounty was granted on Wheat, Barley, and Oats, by the 31st of George the III<sup>d</sup>., Cap. 30; and also the amount of the Bounties therein granted, in the money of the year 1688, allowing for the depreciation which took place in the value of money, betwixt the year 1688 and the year 1790.

Value, in the money of 1688, of the price under which the Bounty was given.	Value of the Bounty in the money of the year 1688.
£. s. d.	£. s. d.
On Wheat when under per Quarter 0 19 10½*	0 2 3 *
On Barley when under per Quarter 0 9 11¼*	0 1 1½*
On Oats when under per Quarter 0 6 3¼*	0 0 10¼*

\* In the Table of Proportions, the value of money in the year 1790, is stated to be to the value of money in the year 1688, as 496 to 22½, and these several sums are in the same proportion to the respective prices under which Bounties were given, and to the different Bounties, as settled by the 31st of George the III<sup>d</sup>., Cap. 30.



## No. 5.

36 *Geo. III. Cap. 21. A.D. 1795.*

The following Bounties are granted :—

20s. per Quarter on Wheat weighing 440lb. per Quarter.

16s. per Quarter.....424lb. per Quarter.

6s. per Cwt. of Wheat flour imported into Great Britain, from any part of Europe, South of Cape Finisterre, or from any part of the Mediterranean, or Africa, before the 30th of September 1796, until the quantity of such Wheat and Flour taken together, shall amount to 400,000 Quarters, estimating  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Cwt of Flour, to one quarter of Wheat.

15s. per Quarter on Wheat weighing 440lb. per Quarter.

12s. per Quarter ..... 424lb. per Quarter.

4s. 6d. per Cwt. on Wheat flour imported from any part of Europe, (not being part of His Majesty's dominions) before the 30th of September 1796, till the quantity shall amount to 500,000 quarters.

20s. per Quarter on Wheat weighing 440lb. per Quarter.

16s. per Quarter.....424lb. per Quarter.

6s. per Cwt. on Wheat flour imported from the Colonies in America, or the United States, before the 30th of September 1796, till the quantity shall amount to 500,000 Quarters.

10s. per Quarter on Wheat weighing 440lb. per Quarter.

8s. per Quarter ..... 424lb per Quarter.

3s. per Cwt. on Wheat flour imported before the 30th of September 1796, exceeding those quantities.

The Ports of Importation limited, and the Corn to be inspected.

39th and 40th of *Geo. III. Cap. 29. A.D. 1800.*

The following Bounties shall be paid :—

On every quarter of Wheat imported from any part of Europe, south of Cape Finisterre, or from any part of

In the table of proportions, the value of money in the year 1800 is stated to be, to the value of money in the year 1688, as 562 to 224; and these several sums are in the same proportion to the respective prices under which Bounties were given, and to the different Bounties as settled by the 44th of Geo. III. Cap. 109.

## No. 8.

Comparisons of the prices of Wheat at different periods, for the purpose of shewing the diminution in the value of Wheat, occasioned by the Bounty granted in 1688; extracted from a Pamphlet, printed betwixt the years 1745 and 1750; to display the damages farmers had sustained from the Bounty on Corn.

£. s. d.

The price of Wheat per Quarter upon a medium taken on 43 years from 1646, being the first year the account commences, to 1688, the year before the Bounty was allowed, appears to be at the rate of ..... 2 10 8

From the medium taken on 43 years from 1689, being the first year the Bounty took place, to the year 1731, the price of Wheat per Quarter appears to be ..... 1 18 0

An annual loss to the farmer since the Bounty took place ..... 0 12 8

From 1669 to 1688, being the last 20 years, before the Bounty was allowed, the price of Wheat per Quarter was, at a medium ..... 2 6 2

From 1726 to 1745, being the last 20 years, on this account the price of Wheat, at a medium per Quarter was ..... 1 17 9½

An annual loss to the farmer in price, since the Bounty took place ..... 0 8 4½

The medium on Wheat from 1649 to 1668, being 20 years, was per Quarter .....	2	12	8½
The medium from 1706 to 1725, being 20 years, was per Quarter.....	2	4	9
	<hr/>		
An annual loss to the Farmer in price, since the Bounty took place.....	0	7	11½
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The medium on Wheat for 14 years from 1675 to 1688 was per Quarter.....	2	5	4½
The medium on Wheat for 14 years from 1732 to 1745 was per Quarter.....	1	15	6½
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An annual loss to the Farmer in price, since the Bounty took place.....	0	9	9½



The medium on Wheat from 1669 to 1693,  
 being 20 years, was per Quarter..... 2 12 81  
 The medium from 1702 to 1726, being 25 years,  
 was per Quarter..... 2 5 9  


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 An annual loss to the Farmer in price, since the  
 Penny took place..... 0 7 114

The medium on Wheat for 14 years from 1675  
 to 1688 was per Quarter..... 2 8 45  
 The medium on Wheat for 14 years from 1702 to  
 1715 was per Quarter..... 1 12 61  


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 An annual loss to the Farmer in price, since the  
 Penny took place..... 0 9 91

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